

THE OBSERVER

The Independent Newspaper Serving Notre Dame and Saint Mary's

VOLUME 44 : ISSUE 52

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2010

NDSMCOBSERVER.COM

Ushers relish Stadium experience

By SARA FELSENSTEIN
News Writer

"Welcome to Notre Dame," they say, with bright yellow jackets and infectious smiles. "It's good that you're here."

There are 850 of them at Notre Dame Stadium, rain or shine, on game days, working up to 12 or 13 hours, arriving from 24 different states and representing a wide range of professions.

Who are they? They are the Notre Dame ushers.

Veteran usher Richard Scheibelhut started his ushering career in the student section 57 years ago, when he was 17 years old.

"I started out one game in the student section, I told them I quit and I've been in Section 23 ever since," he said.

Scheibelhut said one of the best parts about being an usher is interacting with the fans that return game after game. He has seen three generations of families come through his section.

Scheibelhut has not taken a penny in 57 years for his work in the Stadium on Saturdays.

Cappy Gagnon, coordinator of stadium personnel and the head of the ushers, said the majority of the Stadium ushers are volunteers.



Usher Sean Wernert stands in his bright yellow jacket and welcomes fans from around the country to the Notre Dame Stadium on game day.

"I'd say the primary motivation for people to be ushers is that they want to be part of the game day experience representing Notre Dame," Gagnon said. "It's not as comfortable as being a guest — on the other hand, it's hard to compete with the feeling you have when you're there early. You open the Stadium and welcome people and take a lot of pride in being part of the Notre Dame experience."

The usher program dates back to famed football coach Knute Rockne's day.

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Notre Dame usher Thomas Moore stands with students in section 29 on game day.

Stud. gov't listens to "whining"

By JOHN CAMERON
News Writer

Students had the opportunity this week to air their complaints to student government representatives during the first Whine Week.

Student government posted student leaders around campus to field questions and take suggestions for improving the Notre Dame experience.

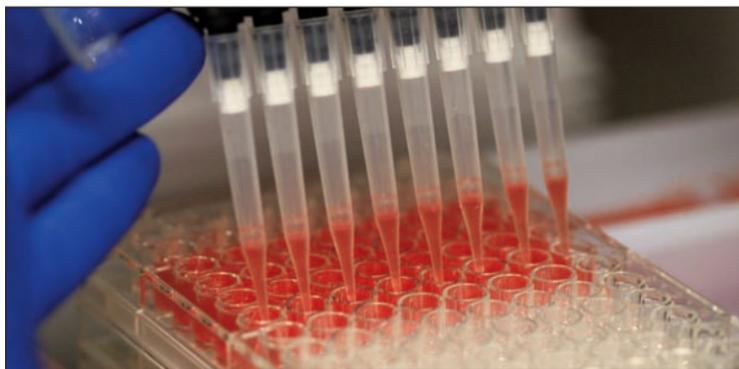
"We have been in the dining halls, LaFortune, and we've had a member of student government go to almost all the Hall Council meetings, and we've also had suggestion boxes in the office," student body president Catherine Soler said. "Right now we're in the compiling process."

Soler said Whine Week, a new event this year, was a result of discussion in Student Senate about the need for improving dialogue between student government and the student body.

"Actually the idea came out of Senate, just conversations about how people don't know what student government does, or don't know how to communi-

see WHINE/page 6

ND biology professors collaborate on malaria



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

Biology professors Dr. Nora Besansky and Dr. Michael Ferdig lead malaria research on campus.

By ANNA BOARINI
News Writer

Notre Dame's research on malaria is a "web of interaction," involving multidisciplinary research and collaboration, biology professor Dr. Michael Ferdig said.

Currently, there are multiple faculty members researching malaria and the mosquito vector that carries it.

Biology professor Dr. Nora Besansky researches the African mosquitoes that carry human malignant malaria. Her current

see MALARIA/page 5

iPad receives rave reviews

By KRISTEN DURBIN
News Writer

After completing Notre Dame's first iPad-based e-reader pilot class in October, Corey Angst and his Project Management students found that the device lived up to its widespread media hype.

"My students felt that the iPad would be useful before they even began using it, and there was hardly any change in that belief over the course of the class," said Angst, assistant professor of management at the Mendoza College of Business.

Angst administered four surveys to his students throughout the course: one before the students received their loaned iPads, one three weeks into the course, one at the end of the course and one a few weeks after returning the devices to the University. He said these surveys provided him with valuable feedback as to whether or not iPads play a significant role



GASPAR GARCIA DE PAREDES | Observer Graphic

in an individual student's learning experience in relation to a specific course.

"One of the goals of this pilot was to monitor the usefulness of the iPad in a classroom setting, and the survey results showed

that the students' opinions on this remained relatively constant," Angst said. "This seven-week class showed that there is tremendous value in the device,

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THE OBSERVER

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The news is reported as accurately and objectively as possible. Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the majority of the Editor in Chief, Managing Editor, Assistant Managing Editors and department editors. Commentaries, letters and columns present the views of the authors and not necessarily those of The Observer.

Viewpoint space is available to all readers. The free expression of all opinions through letters is encouraged. Letters to the Editor must be signed and must include contact information.

Questions regarding Observer policies should be directed to Editor-in-Chief Matt Gamber

POST OFFICE INFORMATION

The Observer (USPS 599 2-4000) is published Monday through Friday except during exam and vacation periods. A subscription to The Observer is \$130 for one academic year; \$75 for one semester.

The Observer is published at:
024 South Dining Hall
Notre Dame, IN 46556-0779
Periodical postage paid at Notre Dame and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
Send address corrections to:
The Observer
P.O. Box 779
024 South Dining Hall
Notre Dame, IN 46556-0779

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CORRECTIONS

The Observer regards itself as a professional publication and strives for the highest standards of journalism at all times. We do, however, recognize that we will make mistakes. If we have made a mistake, please contact us at 631-4541 so we can correct our error.

QUESTION OF THE DAY: WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?



Allison Jeter
sophomore Pangborn

"Hopping spiders"



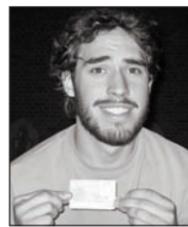
Anthony Pavlov
junior Fisher

"Snakes and being murdered"



Chiamaka Esomou
sophomore Pangborn

"Syrup"



Jack Heinrich
junior Duncan

"Skiing into a tree"



Josh Foster
junior Fisher

"Fear is for the weak."



Thomas Heitker
junior Fisher

"Dementors"

Have an idea for Question of the Day? E-mail obsphoto@gmail.com



TOM YOUNG/The Observer

Students from all four branches of the ROTC program stand guard in front of the Clarke Memorial Fountain Thursday to honor members of the armed forces on Veteran's Day.

OFFBEAT

Woman harasses drivers by repeatedly braking

ABERDEEN, N.J. — Authorities accused a New Jersey woman of repeatedly harassing drivers on the Garden State Parkway by braking repeatedly, causing other motorists to tailgate. Karen Born, 52, was free on \$27,500 bail, charged with harassment, falsely incriminating others and filing false reports to law enforcement.

State Police Sgt. Brian Polite told the Asbury Park Press that state troopers issued a warrant for Born's arrest after 22 incidents of alleged harassment over the summer.

Polite said Born would call police after the other driver pulled over and claim the other driver was harassing and stalking her.

It was not clear whether Born had retained an attorney.

Gunshot victim eats before going to hospital

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Police say a 25-year-old Connecticut man who was shot twice after buying a sandwich at a New Haven deli went home and ate his lunch before going to the hospital. Miguel Soto said he was leaving the deli Tuesday when he heard three gunshots. One bullet hit him in the

left leg, another in the groin. Police said he went home and ate the sandwich before asking his father to take him to a hospital.

Police did not say whether Soto realized immediately that he had been shot, or if he decided the injuries were not serious enough to require an immediate hospital trip.

Officers say his injuries were not life-threatening. A message was left Thursday for a New Haven police spokesman, and no arrests were immediately reported.

Information compiled from the Associated Press.

IN BRIEF

Alumna Danielle Rose, a Catholic Christian music artist will perform tonight at 8 p.m. in the Keenan Hall Keenan Stanford Chapel. Suggested donation is \$3.

Student Activities Office is sponsoring **Fortnight Productions: A Night of One Acts** from 10-11 p.m. tonight in LaFortune Ballroom. The event is free and open to all students. Seating is limited.

Student Union Board will be showing the film "Despicable Me" in DeBartolo Hall at 8 and 10:30 p.m. tonight. Cost is \$3.

The College of Science will continue its **Saturday Scholars Series** this Saturday with the lecture "Your Shrimp Dinner: Overseas Aquaculture and its consequences for Utah's Great Salt Lake." The lecture, given by Professor Gary Belovshy, will take place at 11 a.m. in room 101 of the Jordan Hall of Science.

The College of Arts and Letters will host the **Saturday Scholar series** this Saturday at 12 p.m. in the Snite Museum's Annenberg Auditorium. Agustin Fuentes of the department of anthropology will lecture on "What Race Is, and What It is Not: Why This Is Important."

The **2010 Breen Phillips Breast Cancer Run** will take place this Sunday at 2 p.m. at the Fieldhouse Mall. Cost (including T-shirt) is \$15.

The film "Fantasia" will be shown Sunday at 3 p.m. in the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. Cost is \$3 for students.

To submit information to be included in this section of The Observer, e-mail detailed information about an event to obsnews.nd@gmail.com

	TODAY	TONIGHT	GAME DAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
LOCAL WEATHER						
	HIGH 69 LOW 60	HIGH 53 LOW 44	HIGH 64 LOW 38	HIGH 47 LOW 33	HIGH 48 LOW 31	HIGH 49 LOW 33

ROTC honors Veteran's Day

By NORA KENNEY
News Writer

As the sun set on an unusually warm November evening at Notre Dame, members of the Notre Dame ROTC unit joined several distinguished guests Thursday at the Clarke Memorial Fountain, popularly known as Stonehenge, in honor of Veteran's Day.

The event was the culmination of a 24-hour period, beginning Wednesday at 5 p.m., during which members of the ROTC were placed for non-stop vigilance at the fountain in honor of those who have served the country, especially POWs and MIAs.

The ceremony began at 5:15 p.m. Thursday evening with a moment of silence, the singing of the National Anthem and an invocation by Fr. Sean McGraw, an assistant professor of political science at Notre Dame.

"The Veteran's Day ceremony went very well today," Midshipman Matthew Zak, the trimilitary commander for

ROTC, said. "It is always amazing to see all three units together in one place."

The ceremony's guest speaker was Lt. Col. Charles E. Rice, professor emeritus at Notre Dame's Law School.

Addressing the four branches of the ROTC, who stood throughout the ceremony, Rice talked about the special relationship between ROTC and the University.

"The ROTC have earned the respect of the people here at Notre Dame. We are proud of what you have done and we know you will carry into your service what you have learned here at Notre Dame."

University President Emeritus Fr. Theodore Hesburgh was also present for the ceremony. He addressed the crowd and spoke about the tradition of defending the nation as one that is deeply rooted in Notre Dame's history.

"There is no group here at Notre Dame that I am more proud to honor than the group standing before me," he said. "This is a tradition that Fr. Sorin

would uphold, as he started the Continental Cadets here at Notre Dame."

Congressman Joe Donnelly, a Notre Dame alumnus, also spoke at the event. He thanked the students for their service, as well as Fr. Hesburgh.

"It should be noted that the strength of the ROTC at Notre Dame would not be so without Fr. Hesburgh. On behalf of the United States, Fr. Hesburgh, we thank you."

Donnelly spoke of men and women in the armed forces from Northwestern Indiana who had lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, and of their courage and patriotism.

"I have met some of our ROTC members in the toughest neighborhoods of Baghdad and they have said to me, 'Sir, I have used the skills here that I learned at Notre Dame.'"

Following Donnelly's address, all members of the armed forces stood to be recognized, and the lone sound in the quiet dusk air was the melody of "Taps," being played by junior Midshipmen Steve Prendergast.

The ceremony concluded with a final prayer from Fr. McGraw, who said he was proud to be part of the event.

"As a teacher of many ROTC students, I was just proud to be with them" McGraw said. "It just hits home how commitment and dedication these students put forward."

Zak said the ceremony is much more than a celebration of the armed forces and that it is a tribute to the relationship between the local community and the men and women fighting for the country.

"This ceremony is always very meaningful to anyone who wears a uniform to honor the men and women that have come before us, and those serving today. Also having Fr. Hesburgh come and speak there always is a connection to the Notre Dame students who came before us and served in the military," he said. "This event gives all of us a great appreciation of the support from the University and the South Bend community for the men and women in the armed forces."

Contact Nora Kenney at hkenney@nd.edu

SMC hears "Top Ten" rules for life from CEO

By MEGAN LONEY
News Writer

Vince Caponi, CEO of St. Vincent Health in Indianapolis and former trustee of Saint Mary's College, spoke to Saint Mary's students in a self-described "true David Letterman fashion" talk called "The Top 10 Rules to Live By."

The College's "Cross Currents" program sponsored this talk as part of its ongoing Collegiate Speaker Series.

Using anecdotal framework from his experiences with his daughters, Caponi addressed students with advice on how to approach the business world after graduation. Introducing his "top 10," he told students that they should consider three things as they go through college and enter the business world.

"In order to be a good student, person, employee, there are three things we all want from our experiences: you want to be in on the things that affect you, you want recognition for a job well done, you want to know what you do makes a difference in people's lives and have a very clear insight of what role you play."

"In order to be a good student, person, employee, there are three things we all want from our experiences: You want to be in on the things that affect you, you want recognition for a job well done, you want to know what you do makes a difference in people's lives and have a very clear insight of what role you play."

Vince Caponi
CEO
St. Vincent Health

He followed with his top 10 rules to live by.

Caponi said his first two rules, humility and gratitude, were underrated traits of real leaders. Going into the business world, he said, someone would take a chance on you because you have no experience, and it is important to demonstrate your thanks for the opportunities you are given.

His third rule was about ethics.

"The ethical part is your handshake; it is your honor," Caponi said. "It's something only you have and you are the only one who can make that positive of negative."

The fourth rule was to have a sense of humor, which is important because you have to learn to laugh at yourself. Caponi said laughter can help relieve tensions in a lot of difficult situations.

Caponi also said that everyone should have a "can-do, positive attitude." He told students to remain positive, especially when first entering the career world.

"There are people that walk around with a cloud over their heads, but that will get you nowhere," Caponi said. "When you apply for jobs, there are going to be a lot of people who are going to tell you that you can't do it, but you have to remember that you are a gift from God and that you have a unique talent."

Sixth on Caponi's list was to love where you are. He said that if one does not receive their ideal position in the company, take advantage of the opportunity because situations tend to work out in the end.

As a seventh rule, Caponi said he would advise everyone to try and learn something new everyday. Learning new things, especially details about people, can break down the walls that divide us and allow us to start building relationships. His advice was to learn from outlets that you don't necessarily agree with.

The eighth rule was to communicate often and clearly. Caponi stressed the importance of communication, both verbal and physical communication.

"In terms of jobs, communication is very important," Caponi said. "It's really important that you do it clearly, understandably and often."

The ninth rule to live by, according to Caponi, was to remember that there are two sides to every story. Keeping this in mind, Caponi said to not rush to judgment and give people the benefit of the doubt.

He also said that it is important to explore, probe and to find out the truth in these situations.

Caponi's culminated his top 10 list with a rule that he said was probably the most important of the 10 — volunteer.

He said location isn't an excuse, because there is always an opportunity to spend time giving of yourself to others.

"My advice to you is do what you do, and love what it is that you do," Caponi said.

Contact Megan Loney at mloney@nd.edu

iPad

continued from page 1

but not necessarily in the way we anticipated."

Both Angst and Jon Crutchfield, academic technologies consultant, emphasized the fact that high expectations usually go hand in hand with brand-new technologies, but these expectations usually give way to marked decreases in user satisfaction. However, that trend was not observed in this initial test run at Notre Dame.

"As people begin to use new technologies, their satisfaction usually goes way down once they start to find the limitations of a device," Crutchfield said. "In this case, the satisfaction level of students on the final survey was almost identical to the expectations expressed in the first survey."

In response to the survey question, "Which statement best sums up your general feelings about using the iPad in the Project Management course?" only two of Angst's 36 students chose the answer "I didn't like it," as opposed to 12 students who answered that they loved using the device during the class.

According to Angst and

Crutchfield, the most widely observed drawback to the iPad was its e-reader capabilities, which contrasted with their initial prediction of the device's viability as an alternative to traditional textbooks. Crutchfield noted that most students had difficulty annotating and highlighting text in the electronic version of their textbook and that making the transition from a traditional textbook proved challenging.

"One thing that struck me was my students' responses to whether they thought they could learn more in any class, not just Project Management, using the iPad. Fifteen of them felt that they would learn more just by having the device available."

Corey Angst
professor
Project Management

"We thought the e-book aspect would be the strongest determinant of value for students," Angst said. "Instead, students felt there were limitations to reading books on the device, but they were willing to give up optimal book reading for the iPad's other advantages."

Angst and his students cited the device's portability, consolidation of information in

one place, easy access to content, functional versatility and connectedness as the iPad's advantages. Angst also said many of the applications available on the iPad have significantly improved since the beginning of the class, and he predicts the iPad and other e-readers will function better as textbook alternatives in the future.

Two focus groups met to discuss the role of the iPad in the Notre Dame classroom after the Project Management class ended. Student members of these groups were able to provide feedback about how they adapted to using the devices daily.

"Some older students told us that they had learned how to study successfully over the course of their time at Notre Dame, so asking them to switch to a different style of learning was a challenge," Crutchfield said. "Some of the students were more successful than others at taking what they know and using it differently."

The focus groups also compiled a list of the pros and cons of using iPads in the classroom. However, the surveys Angst administered to his students provided more specific student responses to their individual use of the iPads.

"One thing that struck me was my students' responses to whether they thought they could learn more in any class, not just Project Management, using the iPad," Angst said. "Fifteen of them felt that they would learn more just by having the device available."

Although students were encouraged to use the iPads as they wished without being extensively trained, Angst said that professors who teach iPad-based

classes in the future should have an understanding of apps that are available, as well as provide students with some guidelines as to the device's capabilities in relation to their specific class.

"Professors can set themselves up for failure if they allow student use of the device to be entirely organic," Angst said. "Some students will embrace the freedom, but others won't bother to figure out how to use it if they are focused on more important things in terms of academics."

"When students were asked how the devices would have affected their learning if they had been given them as freshmen, most agreed that they would have learned to study using the tools provided."

Jon Crutchfield
consultant
academic technologies

In terms of the ways students used the iPad to fit their needs, Crutchfield said he was surprised that a few students typed all their class notes on the iPad's keyboard.

"It's not the greatest keyboard in the world, so we expected that to be a challenge," Crutchfield said.

Despite the device's drawbacks, Crutchfield said only two students had technical problems with their iPads, both of which he said were easily resolved. Additionally, the device's monitored security settings prevented one student from losing all his data when his iPad was stolen from his car.

Both Angst and Crutchfield said that the pilot was valuable in highlighting the fact that intro-

ducing the devices at an earlier point in students' college careers would help facilitate further integration of the device into regular learning.

"When students were asked how the devices would have affected their learning if they had been given to them as freshmen, most agreed that they would have learned to study using the tools provided," Crutchfield said.

Angst said the ultimate goals of these pilot classes are centered around the student and his or her individual needs.

"It all comes back to the student choosing a device that allows them to do the things they personally need to do, whether it's the iPad or another device," Angst said.

Overall, Angst and Crutchfield said the pilot achieved the goal of providing more information about the use of e-readers in the classroom, and it will continue as the more data is gathered from the current round of classes using the iPad, including First Year of Studies Dean Hugh Page's Contemplation and the First Year Experience class, librarian Cheri Smith's Library Research course and Professor Erin Ponisciak's Law School 101 class. The devices will be used in a Law School course and at least one foreign language course next semester, Crutchfield said.

"We weren't looking to see if the iPad was the perfect e-reader or classroom support technology," Crutchfield said. "But it gives us a baseline to compare similar devices in the future, which we still intend to do."

Contact Kristen Durbin at kdurbin@nd.edu

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SMC alumna speaks about Army experience

By ALICIA SMITH
Associate Saint Mary's Editor

Saint Mary's alumna Sarah Rykowski said she found the same sense of community in the United States Army that she felt during her time at Saint Mary's College.

"The same sort of sisterhood I had at Saint Mary's I found in the Army," she said.

Rykowski returned to the College to speak in honor of Veterans' Day Thursday in Carroll Auditorium. Rykowski shared her story with students, faculty, staff and community members.

"Policy is about what's happening now, and we're talking about what happened in 2007, but it's relevant because it is about veterans in more than just myself," she said. "Finally, it also takes time for many veterans to come forward about what happened and what their experiences were in their deployment."

After graduating from the College in 2002, Rykowski attended law school before she decided to become a member of the Army.

"I come from a family that has military service in my mom's side which goes back to the Revolutionary War," she said.

Rykowski said she was commissioned into the Army on Sept. 11, 2005.

In April 2007, she was deployed to Iraq to act as an additional attorney and as a foreign claims attorney, each for half of her deployment.

Rykowski recounted her experience on May 17, 2007, where she was wounded when the humvee she was riding in drove over an improvised explosive device.

Rykowski said she and one other person survived the explosion, while three others did not.

Rykowski sustained injuries to her arm and was treated by Army medics on the scene before being taken to the hospital.

"You are kind of caught in a time warp ... time has stopped but time is still moving and you don't really know what is going on," she said.

Though Rykowski was wounded in Iraq, she remained optimistic and stressed the importance of keeping a sense of humor. She explained how she joked around even when she was wounded.

"We combat the somewhat scary, sad things with a sense of humor," she said.

After she was released from the hospital, Rykowski said Saint Mary's alumna Shanna Conner Cronin, one of her close friends from the College, met her and kept her company.

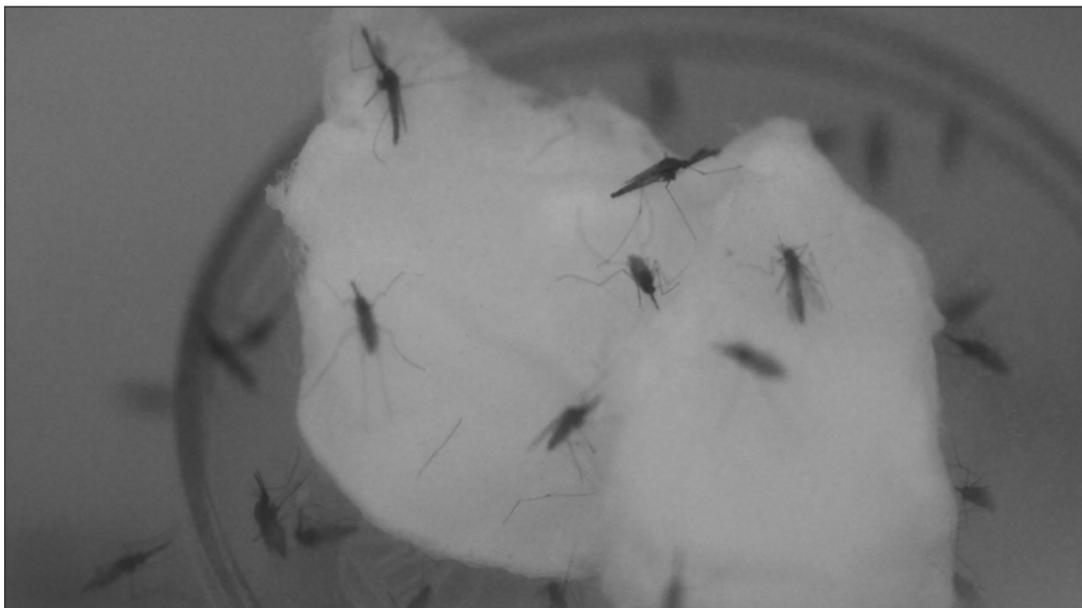
"We flew over to Camp Victory, and the first person to meet me off the aircraft was a Saint Mary's girl," she said. "She is one of my best friends. I talk with her everyday."

After her injury healed, Rykowski said she returned to her deployment and completed it.

Rykowski was awarded with a Purple Heart for her service in Iraq, but she said it wasn't the most important thing she drew from her deployment.

"I felt more proud of finishing that deployment and kind of getting through it than I did actually getting the Purple Heart," she said.

Contact Alicia Smith at asmith01@saintmarys.edu



PAT COVENEY/Observer Photo

Notre Dame biology professors research mosquitoes to understand how the malaria parasite, the mosquito and the human body interact to spread disease.

Malaria

continued from page 1

research examines evolutionary changes of the mosquito *Anopheles Gambiae*.

Ferdig focuses on the vector, studying the parasite itself. His research looks at the malaria parasite and its resistance to drugs.

Together, with other researchers and scientists at Notre Dame, these biologists have been able to comprehensively look at the cause, the mosquito vector and the effect of malaria.

"Malaria is a parasitic disease that is characteristic of poorer parts of the world, especially the tropics," Besansky said.

There are four types of malaria and while all cause harm, only one, malignant malaria, is always fatal, Besansky said.

What makes malaria different than other vector-carried diseases is the complex life cycle of the parasite.

"It would take me about 2 1/2

hours to tell you malaria's lifecycle," Ferdig said.

Besansky said when a mosquito bites a human, the parasite first enters from the bite and then travels to the liver. After it leaves

the liver, the parasite attacks the red blood cells. The red blood cells than burst and the parasite can re-enter the blood stream or attack another part of the body.

What makes malaria a unique parasite is that both humans and mosquitoes carry it.

"The mosquito can transmit the parasite to a human, but if the mosquito bites again, it can take the parasite back into its system in the blood meal," Besansky said.

One of the cutting edge research projects that is unique to Notre Dame is the genomic mapping of both the malaria parasite

and the mosquito vector. While the human genome has already been mapped, the genomic research going on at Notre Dame is highly specialized and important to understanding infectious disease in general.

"Malaria is a parasitic disease that is characteristic of poorer parts of the world, especially the tropics"

Dr. Nora Besansky
professor
Biological Sciences

"Once we know all the genes of the parasite, the parasite and the human and know how they interact, we can understand how drugs would work to stop the parasite," Ferdig said. "This is why the genome

stuff is so powerful. If you can break the cycle somewhere in the malaria life cycle, you can end the disease."

Contact Anna Boarini at aboari01@saintmarys.edu

Analyze Italy's greatest film comedies!
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Ushers

continued from page 1

"When Rockne first had try-outs for ushers, 1,000 people came out to audition," he said.

The distinctive caps the ushers wear also started with Rockne. Ushers in the white caps are called captains — they are first level supervisors. Ushers in gold caps are the top supervisors.

Gagnon, a 1966 Notre Dame alumnus, had a background in security and law enforcement before returning to campus 15 years ago to take a job as an usher, because he said he missed being at Notre Dame. Gagnon said his love for the University is a sentiment that many other ushers share and cite as a reason they join the program. In fact, 500 of the 850 ushers work for free.

Gagnon said the usher application process is very competitive.

"The No. 1 qualification is that the person has to be willing to work a long day, and be an ambassador for Notre Dame," he said. "They have to be hospitable. They have to look out for the safety

of our guests in the Stadium, and occasionally have to enforce Stadium rules."

The ushers come from a variety of backgrounds.

"I have a former ND football player who has a national championship ring, I have an MIT graduate, I have a Yale graduate ... I have a range of professions represented [including] a psychologist, architect, lawyers and college professors," Gagnon said.

Fifteen to 20 of the ushers are parents of former Notre Dame students, and only about eight are Notre Dame alums.

A job as an usher is extremely rewarding, Gagnon said, but there are challenges that come with the job as well.

"The most difficult thing is when you have to remove somebody from the Stadium because of a serious issue, when somebody's fighting or heavily intoxicated," he said. "[Another] difficult thing is when you have injuries or illnesses. We've had people fall or have heart attacks, or have heat-related issues, those kinds of issues that require a lot of care and concern."

Gagnon said the student section is the one place in the Stadium where he does not arbitrarily assign an usher. Every usher that works in the student section has volunteered to work there.

"When I ask people 'why did you sign up to work the student section,' they all give the same answer, 'We like the energy of being there with the students.'"

Supervisor Shirley Cox also found that one of the best aspects of ushering is meeting new people.

Cox started as an usher in the mid-90s when Notre Dame first opened up usher positions for women. At the time, Cox's daughter was a student at Notre Dame.

"[My daughter] got me involved to be an usher ... I was visiting with her one day, and she said, 'Mom, they're going to be opening up ushers for women, would you be interested?' I said, 'I love Notre Dame, I

loved it from day one, I would love to do it.'"

Cox said becoming an usher was a way for her to "give back to Notre Dame."

"I went for an interview ... I received the letter that I was one of the ushers, and I was thrilled," she said.

Cox's daughter graduated in 1998, but Cox never gave up ushering. In fact, she has moved up the ranks since then. She started in section 108 as volunteer usher, then moved to section 125/126 and became a supervisor, and finally was moved to the tunnel and made a top supervisor.

"I love the tunnel, to see the players come in, the band come in, the visiting teams, press conferences," she said. "I'm there, I'm down by the field, and I have to pinch myself to say, 'This is real, Shirley.'"

Ushers may come from various backgrounds and places all over the country, but they all share one thing in common — their love for Notre Dame.

"I love my job, just like all the ushers — every one of them will tell you [that]," Gagnon said. "I loved [Notre

Dame] from day one as a student when I came here 48 years ago, and my feelings haven't changed in 48 years."

Cox recently broke her leg. She said she's like a football player — "out for the season."

The broken leg, however, does not mean her time as an usher is over.

"I'm going to be one of the usher statues — I'm going to be there a long, long time. I just love it too much," Cox said. "I'm going to do it until I can't do it anymore."

Scheibelhut shared similar sentiments. For him, 57 years as an usher simply isn't long enough.

"I figure I have another five, six years — as long as my legs hold out, I'm going to keep coming," he said.

Contact Sara Felsenstein at sfelsen@nd.edu

Whine

continued from page 1

cate with us, we figured it would be our responsibility to reach out to them, to kind of open up the channel of communication between students and student government," she said.

Student body vice president Andrew Bell said student feedback is essential to having effective student leadership.

"I think we can sit in here and try to think of ideas to change student government all day, but it wouldn't be as effective as going out and listening to students directly," he said.

Soler said that the most frequent suggestions involved dining halls, campus venue hours and campus safety.

"We've gotten a lot of dining hall suggestions," she said. "A lot of other things too. Some safety things, there's not enough lighting at certain parts

of campus, and there were a lot of calls to open up the tunnels. There was a suggestion to

get a "Red Box" movie rental location in LaFun, and I got a lot of responses about keeping different hours for venues at LaFun."

While most of the suggestions pertained to the more daily aspects of campus life, Bell said there were also some more bizarre complaints.

"I think the best one I got was I think from Zahm," he said.

"Someone complained their

roommate was abducted by aliens but the administration wouldn't believe them and come to their aid or something like that."

Regardless of how outlandish the suggestion, he said student government would be looking into every one of them.

"Even though we've seen some farfetched ones,

we're going to look through every complaint and consider which are the ones that can be

fixed now and what long term problems we should address and go from there," he said.

"I think we can sit in here and try to think of ideas to change student government all day, but it wouldn't be as effective as going out and listening to students directly."

Andrew Bell
student body vice
president

"We've gotten a lot of dining hall suggestions."

Catherine Soler
student body president

Soler said collecting feedback highlighted the need for greater communication between students and student leaders.

"It's been interesting for us because there's a lot of things we're hearing that we have answers to or have been addressed in the past," she said. "I think it's just a sign that we're not communicating well enough with them with information they should be privy to."

Soler and Bell encouraged students to bring questions, suggestions and complaints to student government at any time.

"We're always available in our office to come up and talk to us, and we're available personally by e-mail or on our student government e-mail," Soler said.

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DNA test casts doubt on executed man's guilt

Associated Press

DALLAS — A DNA test on a single hair has cast doubt on the guilt of a Texas man who was put to death 10 years ago for a liquor-store murder — an execution that went forward after then-Gov. George W. Bush's staff failed to tell him the condemned man was asking for genetic analysis of the strand.

The hair had been the only piece of physical evidence linking Claude Jones to the crime scene. But the recently completed DNA analysis found it did not belong to Jones and instead may have come from the murder victim.

Barry Scheck, co-founder of the Innocence Project, a New York legal center that uses DNA to exonerate inmates and worked on Jones' case, acknowledged that the hair doesn't prove an innocent man was put to death. But he said the findings mean the evidence was insufficient under Texas law to convict Jones.

Jones, a career criminal who steadfastly denied killing the liquor store owner, was executed by injection on Dec. 7, 2000, in the closing weeks of Bush's term as governor and in middle of the turbulent recount dispute in Florida that ended with Bush elected president.

As the execution drew near, Jones was pressing the

governor's office for permission to do a DNA test on the hair. But the briefing papers Bush was given by his staff didn't include the request for the testing, and Bush denied a reprieve, according to state documents obtained by the Innocence Project.

Scheck said he believes "to a moral certainty" that Bush would have granted a 30-day reprieve had he known Jones was seeking DNA testing.

"It is absolutely outrageous that no one told him that Claude Jones was asking for a DNA test," Scheck said. "If you can't rely on the governor's staff to inform him, something is really wrong with the system."

Bush had previously shown a willingness to test DNA evidence that could prove guilt or innocence in death penalty cases. Earlier in 2000, he had granted a reprieve to a death row inmate so that Scheck and other attorneys could have evidence tested. The test confirmed the man's guilt and he was executed.

A spokesman for Bush, who is on a book tour, declined to comment Thursday.

The other primary evidence against Jones came from one of two alleged accomplices: Timothy Jordan, who did not enter the liquor store but was believed to have planned the robbery and provided the gun. Jordan testified that

Jones told him he was the triggerman. However, under Texas law, accomplice testimony isn't enough to convict someone and must be supported by other evidence. That other evidence was the hair.

"There was not enough evidence to convict, and he shouldn't have been executed," Scheck said.

Scheck, a death-penalty opponent, said the case shows that the risk of a tragic mistake by the legal system is just too high. "Reasonable people can disagree about the moral appropriateness of the death penalty. The issue that has arisen is the risk of executing the wrong person," he said.

San Jacinto County District Attorney Bill Burnett, who prosecuted the case, died earlier this year.

"I still think he was guilty," Joe Hilzendager, the murder victim's brother, said Thursday. "I think they executed the right man."

Former San Jacinto County Sheriff Lacy Rogers also said he is convinced Jones committed the crime — "without a doubt in my mind."

In the nearly 35 years since capital punishment was reinstated in the U.S., there has never been a case in which someone was definitively proven innocent after being executed. That would be an explosive finding,

since it would corroborate what opponents of the death penalty have long argued: that the legal system is flawed and that capital punishment could result in a grave and irreversible error.

Jones was condemned to die for the 1989 killing of liquor store owner Allen Hilzendager, who was shot three times outside the town of Point Blank, population 559. Authorities said his getaway driver was Danny Dixon, previously convicted of shooting a girl between the eyes and burying her in a cemetery.

During the trial, a forensic expert testified that he examined the hair under a microscope and concluded that it could have come from Jones but not from Dixon or the store owner. No DNA test was performed for the trial.

Prosecutors also hammered on Jones' brutal past. While serving a 21-year prison sentence in Kansas, he poured a flammable liquid on his cellmate and set him on fire, killing him.

Jones was executed at age 60, the last person put to death during Bush's time as governor. In his final statement, Jones did not acknowledge guilt but told the Hilzendager family he hoped his death "can bring some closure to y'all. I am sorry for your loss and hey, I love all y'all. Let's go."

More than three years

after the execution, Jordan recanted his claim that Jones admitted to being the triggerman. In an affidavit, Jordan said he was scared, and "I testified to what they told me to say."

Texas is far and away the No. 1 death penalty state, having executed 464 people over the past three decades.

The Jones case is second time this year that the guilt of an executed Texas inmate was thrown into doubt. Cameron Todd Willingham was put to death in 2004 after being convicted of setting the 1991 fire that killed his three daughters. But several renowned experts said earlier this year that the investigation of the fire was so flawed that the arson finding can't be supported.

The hair in the Jones case was tested 10 years after the execution at the request of his son Duane, along with the Innocence Project, other groups and The Texas Observer magazine. Prosecutors agreed to the testing.

"At the very least, if they had tested his DNA before he was executed, he could have gotten a new trial or his sentence overturned or changed," Duane Jones said Thursday. He said his father "told me that he had robbed banks, that he was a thief. But he wasn't a person who would go out and murder someone on the street."

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Travelers disembark nightmare cruise ship

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — They can call it a nightmare. A cruise from hell. Even a Spamcation. Whatever they label it, the grueling three-day journey of the crippled Carnival Splendor is over, and the nearly 4,500 passengers and crew members can forget about the backed-up toilets, the darkened, stuffy cabins and the canned meat.

"I love being back on land," said passenger Ken King, 42, of Los Angeles.

As the ship docked on Thursday, people who had gathered on the decks and about 100 waiting onshore cheered loudly. Along the harbor, tourists, joggers and fishermen stopped to snap photos.

Passengers snapped up \$20 T-shirts being sold on land with the phrase: "I survived the 2010 Carnival cruise Spamcation."

An engine fire aboard the 952-foot cruise liner on Monday morning knocked out power early in its seven-day trip to the Mexican Riviera, setting the ship adrift about 200 miles outside San Diego and 44 miles off the coast of Mexico.

No one was hurt, but passengers said they were jolted awake by the fire. Few of them panicked.

Smoke filled hallways toward the back of the ship, and a smoky odor reached the front cabins. Carnival said a crankcase split on one of the ship's six diesel engines, causing the fire.

"It felt like an earthquake and sounded like a jackhammer," said Amber Haslerud, 27, of Chula Vista.

The captain immediately announced that there would be no need to abandon ship, said Amy Watts, 25, of Seattle. "You think about the Titanic," she said.

The fire left the ship without air conditioning, hot water or hot food. The casino was closed and, for a time, so were the bars. The swimming pool was off-limits because the pumps wouldn't work.

Navy helicopters flew in Spam, Pop Tarts and canned crab meat and other goods.

Passengers on lower decks had to climb as many as nine flights of stairs to get to the cafeteria only to meet long lines that stretched on for hours. By the time those at the end got to the food, they were left with tomatoes and lettuce, Haslerud said.

Some passengers carried food to those who used walkers and canes and couldn't climb stairs to reach the food lines.

"We have not had a hot cup of coffee in four days," said passenger Fahizah Alim, 26, of Sacramento, who ate at night by flashlight. "This was my first cruise and it was no luxury, no fun."

Passengers ended up getting by on a diet with lots of bread, vegetables and, sometimes, sandwich meat.

"If you could see the things they put on sandwiches, seriously," said Peg Fisher of Las Vegas, who was on her first cruise with her husband. "This could be the only cruise ever where people lost weight instead of gaining weight."

For her, getting by without working toilets on the first day was the biggest challenge.

After 15 hours, she couldn't wait any longer and hoped for the best as she flushed her cabin toilet.

"I ran out in the halls, 'The toilets flush!' People were like, 'Are you kidding?' They went running into their cabins," she said.

Life gradually improved as the hours ticked by, with passengers trying to pass time the low-tech way.

Children played miniature golf and board games — before sunset. Kiara Arteaga, 11, from Visalia, Calif., said the crew taught the children how to the dance to Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

"It was fun," she said.

Passengers sat on the deck and watched the sailors aboard the nearby aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan. At night, they sang in the dark or resigned themselves to early bedtimes.

About 250 magicians who were on the cruise for an industry convention entertained guests for hours. Live bands played, including one that drew chuckles by breaking into a song from the movie "Titanic."

By the second day there was free beer, wine and soda at the bars.

"There were a lot of people getting smashed off warm beer," said Chris Harlen, a Buena Park dental technician who was on board with his wife and two children.

Gerry Cahill, chief executive of Carnival Corp.'s Carnival Cruise Lines, said he doubted other ships in the Miami-based company's fleet were at risk.

The National Transportation Safety Board said late Thursday that the probe into the fire's cause would be conducted by Panama. Panama agreed to let the U.S. Coast Guard join the investigation because most of the passengers were U.S. citizens and two NTSB experts would assist, the NTSB said.

The incident will be costly for Carnival, but it won't have to repay the Navy for delivering food from the USS Ronald Reagan, which costs about \$1 million a day to operate. The carrier was nearby on a training mission, and responding to the ship was nothing more than a "minor distraction," said Chief Petty Officer Terry Feeney.

Passengers will get a refund, including airfare, and a free cruise. Those holding reservations on the next Splendor cruise, which was scheduled to depart Sunday but was canceled, will be offered full refunds and a 25 percent discount on a future cruise.

Several passengers said they would take Carnival's offer for a free cruise.

"I'm a math person. What are the chances this would happen twice to the same person? I'm going with the odds. We're from Vegas. We're coming back," Fisher said.

About 75 buses took passengers to locations including Long Beach, where the Splendor is based. Passengers also were given the option of staying overnight at San Diego hotels.

Magician Gary Grabel said he was looking forward to spending the next few days in the city.

"To kind of catch up on my vacation," he said.

Artisans reincarnate tree

Associated Press

YARMOUTH, Maine — In life, New England's champion elm tree, nicknamed Herbie, stretched more than 100 feet skyward, towering over its neighbors and becoming a local landmark.

Nearly 10 months after being dismantled by chain saw, the majestic tree has been reincarnated by artisans into a variety of items including a stunning electric guitar. The custom guitar, along with baseball bats, upscale furniture and other keepsakes, will be auctioned off Saturday to benefit the Yarmouth tree trust.

"It's mindboggling how much has been done with it," said Jan Ames Santerre, senior planner with the Maine Forest Service, one of the sponsors in The Herbie Project.

One of the tallest American elms in the country, the 110-foot-tree survived 14 bouts of Dutch elm disease, thanks to the town's longtime tree warden, Frank Knight, who's now 102.

But Herbie had to be cut down in January after succumbing to the fungal disease.

Seeking a silver lining, the town divvied up the 15-ton trunk and massive limbs among various artisans, who found unique ways to give Herbie new life.

Those include a mantle clock, lamps, walking sticks, a music stand, baseball bats, tables, benches, bowls, platters, a desk, step stools, bottle stops and jewelry boxes. A few whimsical

items include a bench that incorporates pitch forks and another with pick axes for legs.

But perhaps the most striking of all is the guitar that looks almost too nice to play, created by Andrew Olson, who makes guitars and mandolins in Freeport.

"When I first heard the story that the tree was coming down, just being a guitar builder and wood maker, I wanted to get my hands on some of that wood," Olson said.

His finished product is a solid body guitar with Herbie's wood in the body and the neck, along with an ebony fingerboard, suitable for rock and blues. Bidding starts at \$3,500.

Olson said he hopes the buyer isn't afraid to play it.

"As far as I'm concerned, every musical instrument should be played. I like the idea of it being a piece of art that's being used to create music at the same time," he said.

Another unusual piece is an intricately carved portrait of Knight.

Knight, Yarmouth's volunteer tree warden, realized he couldn't save the town's elms as they succumbed to Dutch elm disease. So he focused his efforts on Herbie.

Over five decades, Knight oversaw selective pruning of Herbie's diseased limbs, and applications of insecticides and fungicides. The pair became well known, both in Yarmouth and beyond. Eventually, however, the tree succumbed to Dutch elm disease and was cut down on Jan. 19.

Herbie was 217 years old, meaning it was a seedling in 1793, the year President George Washington began

his second term and Eli Whitney created his cotton gin.

Knight already has a couple of keepsakes from Herbie. A night stand that's 100 percent Herbie is in the dining room of his house. He also has a

walking stick made from Herbie.

Joined Thursday by his friend Deb Hopkins, the town's current tree warden, Knight said he still marvels at all the interest generated by Herbie, described by Knight as an "old friend." He said many people told him they shed tears over his loss, but Knight said he's doing just fine.

"Sad about Herbie? No, there's a time for everything. There's no question about it," he said. "It's way beyond my time now. Nothing is forever. Nothing is forever."

"When I first heard the story that the tree was coming down, just being a guitar builder and wood maker, I wanted to get my hands on some of that wood."

Andrew Olson
Wood worker

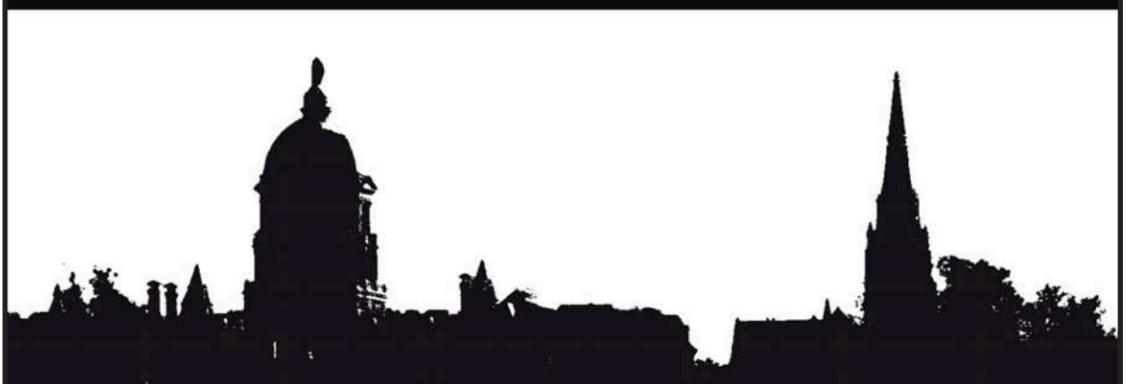
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Experts fear suicide copycats

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The experts call it “contagion” when a suicide or rash of suicides inspires others to follow in an attempt at martyrdom or solidarity in death.

Most people would call them copycat suicides. Whatever the name, it appears to have been at play in at least one suicide since Rutgers University freshman Tyler Clementi's highly publicized jump off the George Washington Bridge. And experts fear that other recent suicides might fit the mold or that more are ahead.

That creates a conundrum for advocates who want to stop teenage bullying and their related suicides, as well as for the media outlets that cover them: how to spread the word without romanticizing the problem or unwittingly encouraging vulnerable teenagers to choose death.

“They may see this as a somewhat glamorous ending — that the youth got lots of attention, lots of sympathy, lots of national concern that they never got in life,” said Anara Guard, a senior adviser at the Boston-based Suicide Prevention Resource Center. “The second possible factor is that vulnerable youth may feel like, ‘If they couldn't cut it, neither can I.’”

Someone who's mentally ill may learn about a suicide and consider it a reasonable option, said Madelyn Gould, professor of psychiatry and public health at Columbia University in New York: “A vulnerable person might say, ‘That stopped the pain,’” she said.

Experts say that while contagion is a real issue, it's getting more difficult to identify.

Ann Haas, director of prevention programs at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, said that before the Internet, it was relatively easy to track the phenomenon. When several happened within the circulation area of a newspaper, contagion

was likely a factor.

But when news knows no geographical boundaries, she said, it's hard to tell whether the suicides are linked. And Clementi's death reached farther than most suicide stories do.

Authorities say the 18-year-old killed himself after learning that his Rutgers roommate and another student peeked via webcam as he had an intimate encounter with a man. His death followed a string of suicides by teens nationwide believed to have been bullied for their perceived sexual orientation and quickly became a cause celebre.

A pair of issues long known to gay rights advocates and suicide prevention experts soon became more widely known: Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth are more likely to attempt suicide than their straight counterparts. And bullied youths are more likely to try suicide than those who aren't.

“There was no way that Tyler Clementi's death was not going to be covered,” said Columbia University's Gould. “He jumped from the George Washington Bridge, and he mobilized the need for a lot of prevention efforts. It's a good aftermath of a horribly tragic event.”

President Barack Obama and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres posted videos online calling for an end to bullying. One day last month became “Wear Purple Day” to protest bullying. New Jersey lawmakers touted anti-bullying legislation that took on more urgency after Clementi's death.

Then, last week, a Pennsylvania teenager stepped in front of a tractor-trailer, leaving behind a note saying that he was tired of being called “faggot” and “sissy” — and that he wanted to draw more attention to the problem of bullying.

By the count of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, it was at least the sixth suicide of a young person in the U.S. who was gay or tor-

mented for being gay since Clementi's death. Experts wonder whether the latest cases are at least partly reactions to the Rutgers case — and the only people who know for sure are the victims.

Scholars can't say whether either problem is getting more severe or just more widely reported because no data show what percentage of gay youths or bullying victims are suicidal. Most of the nation's 34,000 suicides a year don't get coverage.

Or, perhaps, the suicides are like those that have been happening all along, but these are attracting media attention because of the new focus on the previously neglected problem of bullying-related suicide.

Laura McGinnis, spokeswoman for The Trevor Project, which runs crisis intervention and suicide prevention programs aimed at gay youths, said that since Clementi's death her group's crisis hot line has handled about 75 percent more calls than usual. Requests from schools and community leaders for “survival kits” have spiked even more, she said.

It's important for people who are feeling suicidal to know where to turn to for help, whether it's a hot line, a friend or a hospital, she said.

“There are people out there who can help you, who are willing to listen, to help you be the person you feel inside that you are,” she said.

To reduce the chance of contagion, media outlets should be careful not to conclude that suicides are the result of just one factor — and they should show the pain the suicides cause for families, said Roy Peter Clark, a senior scholar at the Poynter Institute, a journalism think tank in St. Petersburg, Fla.

“It's not whether you cover these, but how you cover them,” Clark said.

It's not usually a single event that triggers a suicide, Haas said, and most people who kill themselves are depressed or dealing with other mental illness.

ICE and jails' relationship concerns immigrants

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Luis Guerra swore he had nothing to do with any murder, that whoever picked him out of a lineup was wrong. Still, he was held at the Rikers Island jail for more than a year before the charges were dropped.

It didn't end there. Federal immigration officials stepped in because Guerra was in the country illegally, brought over from Mexico as a child. He ended up in federal immigration detention in Texas before being allowed to return to Manhattan; he's now waiting to find out whether he'll be shipped to a country he hasn't seen since he was 9.

Merely being at Rikers put him on the radar of the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau, said Guerra, 21, who's trying to get a college degree while awaiting word on his future. City authorities made “a mistake, and now I'm paying for their mistake,” he said. “I was living a normal life before.”

Removing illegal immigrants who come in contact with the criminal justice system is a significant part of ICE's nationwide enforcement efforts, but it needs the cooperation of local law enforcement to do so. The relationships that make it work are causing concern not just in New York, but also in places like Arlington County, Va.; Washington, D.C.; Santa Clara County, Calif.; and San Francisco.

Immigrant advocates and some politicians find it disturbing that local officials work with ICE on identifying illegal immigrants. In New York, they say, it puts a city that owes its existence to immigrants in the deportation business and breeds fear among immigrants that any contact with authorities — even reporting crimes — could have severe consequences.

“It is really not a good idea to have large segments of your community be afraid of law enforcement,” said Nancy Morawetz, a professor at the New York University School of Law and part of its Immigrant Rights Clinic.

Guerra, testifying at a City Council hearing on the issue Wednesday, said he saw that firsthand after his 2007 arrest on a second-degree murder charge.

“There were people who witnessed the murder, people who could have cleared my name,” he said, “but they were afraid to go to the police after they heard what was happening to me with immigration.”

ICE has had a presence at New York's main jail complex for at least 15 years. The city Department of Correction says federal regulations require it to comply with things like detainers that ICE puts on inmates it wants custody of.

In the 2010 fiscal year, 3,155 out of 13,386 foreign-born inmates had ICE detainers, and 2,552 of them were released directly into federal custody when they were discharged from Rikers, the department said. Nationwide, about half of the nearly 393,000 people removed from the country in the past year were criminals, according to Homeland Security Department statistics.

“Our top priority is to identify

and remove criminal convicted aliens who pose a threat to the community and to national security,” said ICE spokesman Ivan Ortiz-Delgado.

ICE says the city is obligated to hold anyone the agency has put a detainer on, and Department of Correction spokeswoman Sharman Stein echoed that.

If anything, ICE should be taking more people into the detention and deportation system, said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which supports tighter controls on immigration.

He argued that every illegal immigrant is deportable at any time, and that as it is, ICE exercises discretion in terms of whom it detains. Advocates' fears of a dragnet dragging are overblown, he said.

“I'd be ecstatic if this program worked the way immigrant rights groups fear it does,” he said.

The federal agency often comes under fire for its practices, with critics citing issues like transfers of detainees far away from family and friends, and people in the system having limited access to legal resources that could allow them to stay in the country.

The city is going along with that by not exercising more care in who gets turned over to ICE, critics say. It's one thing for people convicted of violent felonies to be turned over, they say; it's another for someone convicted of a misdemeanor or of nothing at all.

That would include Jose Reyes, a legal resident from the Dominican Republic. Arrested in May 2009 after an argument with his ex's new boyfriend, an immigration detainer was put on him because of a misdemeanor drug arrest from 1997. He was able to avoid deportation after that case was reopened and the charge taken down to disorderly conduct.

“They say they're trying to arrest only criminals,” he said through a translator at Wednesday's hearing. “It is not fair that people who have these small convictions are deported.”

Critics also worry what the future holds as the Secure Communities program, a more extensive immigration enforcement effort not yet in use in New York City, continues to be implemented around the country as part of a national rollout planned by 2013.

There is confusion over whether localities can opt out of the program, under which the fingerprints of anyone arrested for anything from a traffic violation to a violent crime are automatically checked against federal immigration records.

Arlington County, Washington and Santa Clara County voted recently to opt out of the program, saying it could lead to racial profiling, and San Francisco officials tried — with no luck — to drop it.

“I understand that the goal of the relationship between ICE and the Department of Correction is one that is based on the goal of public safety, and keeping New York City residents safe from individuals who are criminals and could do harm,” Council Speaker Christine Quinn, among New York's most powerful politicians, said Wednesday.

Presented by the Department of Communication Studies, Dance, and Theatre,
and the Department of Music

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Book by James Lapine

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INSIDE COLUMN

Dining hall disaster

It's 12:35 p.m., Monday afternoon. South Quad is bustling, I've been in class since 8 a.m., and there's nothing I want more than to get a quick lunch before heading back to

John Cameron

*News
Production
Editor*

Keough, probably for an excessively-long nap my roommates will judge me for taking. One thing stands between me and that

lunch-nap combo: a massive crowd. I guess then it's more like two thousand things. After waiting two minutes to get swiped in, things are looking even worse: This truly is a feeding frenzy.

It seems like a million people are going in all directions, with no discernible flow or organization, while employees look flustered and push giant carts of food or dishes around, pausing occasionally to awkwardly wedge between students to drop off a pile of plates. Add to this the fact that more than half of the student body seems to get extremely confused with the moving and stopping process once they step inside, and it adds up to a frustrating mess. Don't even get me started on the corner between the vegetables and grill.

What seems like a full 20 minutes later (minutes of napping I'll never get back), I walk into the dining area and do the usual pause, look around ... look around ... look around ... "There they are." I sit down, probably sweating a little at this point. My friends are at all different stages in the dining process: One has just started eating, another is wrapping up, one just got fro-yo while another is paging through The Observer, (probably skipping the Inside Column) obviously ready to leave. The whole situation is less than ideal.

Sure, I could go downstairs and get grab-n-go, but some days seven points just doesn't cut it. Maybe (but probably not) North Dining Hall will be less congested, but honestly, who in their right mind wants NDH food when there's South?

I don't know what the possible solutions are. Maybe it's a change in layout to loosen up traffic, maybe an improvement to grab-n-go, maybe they can tell the freshmen there's a dorm party on North Quad. What I do know is that there's got to be something that can be done to make the dining hall rush hour a little less awful.

As it's been 57 years since the last was built, maybe it's time for the University to think about adding another dining hall location. While I appreciate the community-based experience of meeting up with people at a single location, there's something to be said for the state school, "I get dinner on the first floor of my dorm" lifestyle. Notre Dame's been expanding and building up anyway, maybe one of the next projects can be a new dining hall. It would probably benefit the stress level and sanity of the entire student body.

P.S. Freshmen — there's a dorm party on North Quad tomorrow at 12:35 p.m.

The views expressed in the Inside Column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer. Contact John Cameron at jcamero2@nd.edu

Super sad Senior Day

The class of 2011 has gotten to see the story happen, as painful and frustrating as it's been. We have some ownership over it — and maybe in 50 years, if Notre Dame hits a slump again, we too, will be able to write to The Observer and complain about how ungrateful the student body is for the gift they've been given.

But for now, we are students. If only for a few more months. And we've seen how teams still feel that beating Notre Dame is the greatest victory in their program's history (see statements by the coaches of Tulsa, Connecticut and Syracuse). We watched the hiring and firing of Notre Dame coaches take over ESPN last fall, and we've even seen our losses make headlines.

Why? Because it's still Notre Dame.

In 2007, the lows were the lowest in Notre Dame history — the first loss to Navy in nearly half a century, not to mention 38-0 beatings from USC and Michigan. But an upset win over UCLA, a senior day victory (the last one Notre Dame Stadium has seen) against Duke and a season-ending romp versus Stanford kept our spirits alive.

The next fall, a riotous victory in the rain over the Wolverines was balanced out by a snowball-laden loss versus Syracuse on Senior Day.

Yet the Hawaii Bowl that Christmas and the shut-out win over Nevada to start the 2009 season were enough to sustain us through a string of last-minute wins (over Purdue, Washington and Michigan State).

We started calling ourselves the "Cardiac Catholics" and, despite a down-to-the-wire loss to Michigan, Notre Dame entered USC week on a high unmatched since then. Campus that week was electric. Signs were hung from dorm windows, bumper stickers prophesying Irish victory were slapped on light posts and a brigade of students scrawled slogans on sidewalks with chalk. Students and visitors alike crowded at the entrance to the Notre Dame Stadium to "greet" the Trojans for their walk-through. Even the desktop wallpapers in the computer

clusters proclaimed "Go Irish, Beat Trojans." The game itself was outrageously exciting, neck and neck until the very end — when Notre Dame lost.

We can't really assess the highs and lows of this season, since we still have three games to go. For seniors, it's been yet another year of excitement and hope reined in by disappointment and frustration.

But if Notre Dame football is like that bad movie you still love to watch, then some of the moments from this year seem like outtakes, those scenes too ridiculous to make the final cut.

The fake field goal at Michigan State. Losing in the final minutes to Michigan. Getting stomped by Navy — again. An interception in the end zone when an easy field goal by a perfect kicker would have been made a sure win over Tulsa.

Notre Dame football is supposed to be about tradition and honor and winning — that's what we think when coming in as hopeful, spirited freshmen.

The final moments against Tulsa encapsulated the last four years of Notre Dame football — what seems like a sure thing ends up falling apart.

Yet even when it does, we still stick around. We still buy season tickets, we still buy The Shirt, we still go to tailgates, and try as we might to keep it cool, we still get worked up over Notre Dame football precisely because it is more than a game.

Though so many times over the past four years we have wished the season had ended sooner, we are heartbroken that this is the true finale.

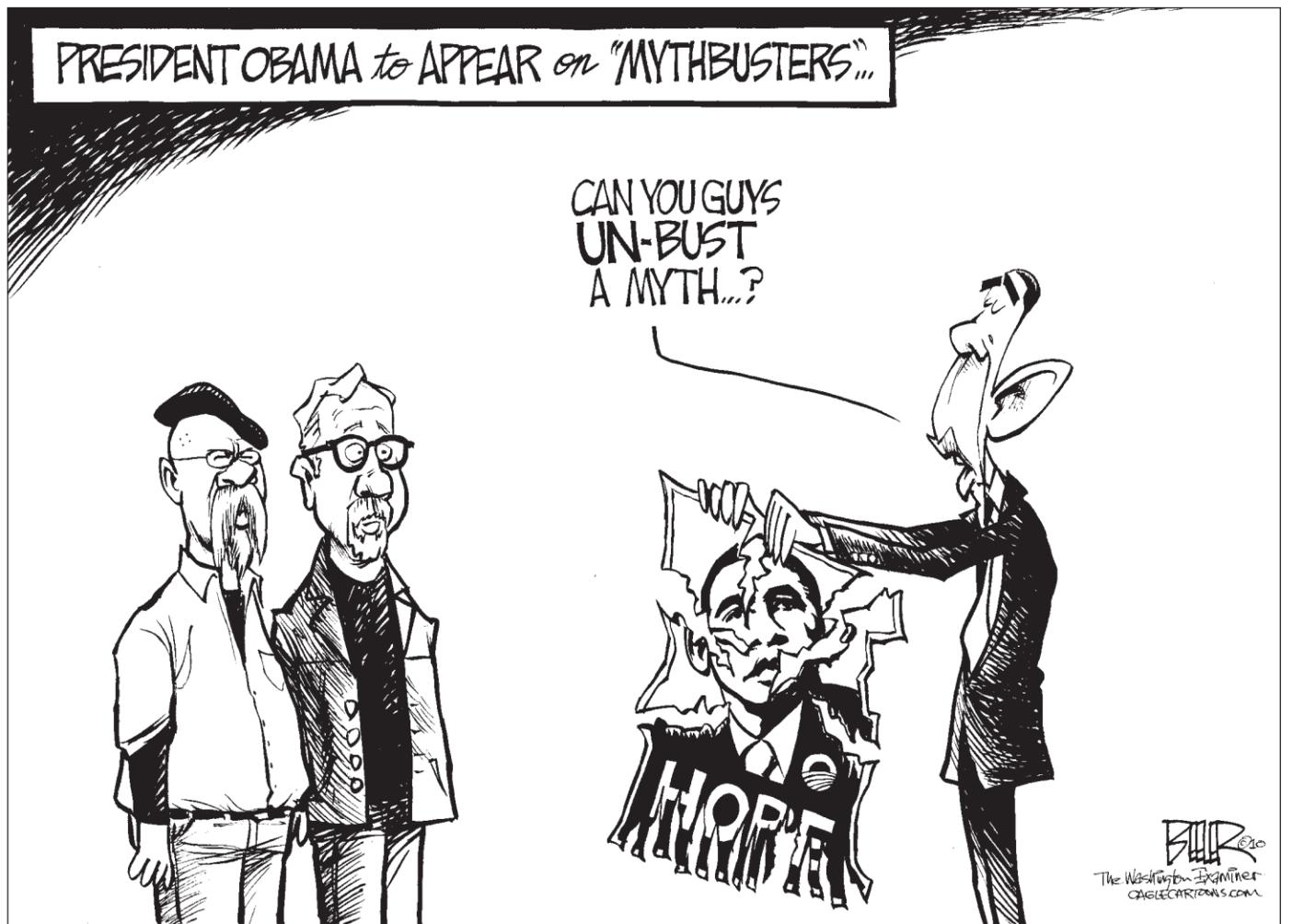
And wherever seniors are next fall, we will have our Irish gear with us. We will brag about our status as the class with the most losses in Notre Dame history, but we will still tune in every Saturday and support our team to the point of being obnoxious.

Notre Dame still matters to college football coaches and players, to television viewers and to journalists and bloggers across the country. But it matters even more to the seniors who will stand for their last Alma Mater Saturday.

And it always will.

THE OBSERVER
Editorial

EDITORIAL CARTOON



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The habit of giving only enhances the desire to give."

Walt Whitman
U.S. poet

Submit a Letter
to the Editor at

www.ndsmcobserver.com

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"God does not ask us to be successful. He asks us to be faithful."

Mother Theresa
Indian humanitarian

The meaning of freedom

Freedom is “the absence of necessity, coercion or constraint in choice or action” (legal definition). The word freedom dominates the U.S. political discourse. While the nature of the word is expansive, its use in U.S. politics has been deduced to a concrete and tightly bound definition of personal choice without the interference of government. This interpretation of the word and its portrayal as the founder’s sole intention defined the rhetoric of the wave of conservative victories in 2010.



Chris Rhodenbaugh

In Pursuit of Social Justice

What was left out of 2010 debate is that there is a spectrum of freedom that spans from government intruding on individual freedom by requiring certain behavior from its citizens, to an economic structure that chains people to economic necessity in their decision making. The debate of what it means to be free is not as simplistic as conservatives like to believe. A person who must choose to turn down treatment for a disease because her family cannot afford it, is equally relevant to the discussion of freedom as someone who is forced to buy health insurance to prevent free-riding and bring costs down for everyone. Let the citizens choose whether they want to prevent government from protecting citizens from medical tragedies due to economic constraints, but it is unjust to claim that more government involvement in health care unequivocally

means less freedom.

Before further argument, it must be exposed how far the lines have been moved on the definition of freedom. The 4.6 percent tax increase President Obama is seeking on the wealthiest two percent to a rate of 39.6 percent, the highest tax rate under Clinton when the budget was balanced and more than 22 million jobs were created, has been compared to socialism and a government takeover of the economy. These claims become increasingly hyperbolic the more history is examined. The new tax rate under President Obama on the highest earners would be considerably lower for that tax bracket than the rates of three Republican presidents in their third year in office, prior to being reelected. Under the Eisenhower administration the U.S. had a top marginal income tax rate of 91 percent, under Nixon it was 71.75 percent and finally under Reagan it was 50 percent.

While it is always a temptation to create growth as fast as possible by dismantling what appear to be irrational limitations, the temptations must occasionally be refused. A new political class has been elected that believe the U.S. needs to drastically reduce restraints on business designed to protect society. The core belief is that taking away the freedom of business to act in its best interest is what is preventing our economy from a full recovery. Democrats do not want to stop business, President Obama and the vast majority of Democrats are ardent capitalists who believe a system of competition and markets drives ingenuity and efficiency, but they also believe speed limits must be set that ensure the long term health of society.

It is a natural impulse to want to get somewhere as fast as possible or to have it as cheap as possible, but without constraint that urge has likely created problems for every American. The same will occur across society when regulations are removed, and programs designed to keep the financially vulnerable above water while they recover their health, work to find employment or get an education will be cut in order to reduce taxes on businesses and the wealthiest two percent.

The United States will never represent anything but the strength and opportunity of capitalism despite the worst fears of the right. Setting limits to ensure the health of civil society is not an infringement on the founding values of this country or the freedoms of individual citizens. It is not anti-business to disagree with business some of the time. In reality, business functions better in the long term if there is some basis of equality to drive aggregate demand. The United States is at risk to succumbing to a systemic risk of democratic governance, that short term need or pleasure, will replace sound and balanced long term economic growth and societal health.

It is important to have a social infrastructure in society designed to promote freedom from making choices based on economic need. Are seniors more free when cost cutting results in the retirement age on social security being pushed to 70? Should the poor have the freedom to know they can temporarily feed their families with food stamps in order to buy other necessities for their family? Or should their success in the free market determine the family’s survival? Should Americans have the freedom to pollute the environment or the freedom to live with clean air,

clean water, and a stable climate? Should companies have the freedom to mislead people into debt they cannot afford, or should people be protected against exploitative contracts written by the nation’s wealthiest lawyers? Do people have the freedom of using their voice in democracy? Or is it more important that the government not regulate campaign donations letting corporate money take over elections? These are debates on freedom that should not have clear partisan lines. Unfortunately, these issues are robbed of a fair hearing when one party monopolizes the definition of freedom.

A real discussion of freedom in America does not leave out the millions of Americans who work hard and play by the rules only to remain in poverty. No one is less free in the United States than the 43.6 million people that live in poverty according to the Census Bureau. In 2010, one in five U.S. families admit to struggling to put food on the table and 20 percent of children are growing up in poverty. Should we put freedom from government influence ahead of the success of the next generation? It is fair to debate the level of which government should be involved to ensure opportunity and a safe and just society, but it is dishonest to claim that the only domestic force threatening the freedom of U.S. citizens is the U.S. government.

Chris Rhodenbaugh is a senior political science major and editor of www.LeftysLastCry.com, Notre Dame’s Progressive Headquarters. He can be contacted at crhodenb@nd.edu

The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

One last chance

This weekend our senior class will stand in the Notre Dame student section one last time as members of the student body: one more chance to pack into the stands with your closest friends, and one more chance to fill Notre Dame Stadium with the proud voice of its students. This is a class that has experienced four of the toughest years any Notre Dame fan has had to endure, yet has faithfully arrived at each new game with their chins held high.

As you file in through Gate E this weekend, take a look around you and soak it all in. This is something special that so few people ever get to experience. The spirit, tradition and loyalty of Notre Dame’s student body are unsurpassed by any other university.

So I write to you now as a fellow student and a senior contemplating my last chance to cheer on our football team at home this weekend. Throughout the last four years our loyalty has never wavered — don’t allow it to falter now. Come out and support your team at home one last time this weekend, beginning at the pep rally Friday night. There will be a parade and walk over from Main Circle at 6:00 p.m. to Irish Green, a senior tribute during the pep rally and fireworks afterwards, so it will definitely be a good show. Our football team needs us now, more than ever, to show up and prove to them that we still believe.

Go Irish! Beat Utah!

David Zimmer
 senior
 Notre Dame Leprechaun
 Nov. 11

Thank you Security Hut

Call me warmhearted, but upon reading the SMCurity (Nov. 9) of a fellow Saint Mary’s student I felt compelled to stop by the Security Hut at Saint Mary’s and personally deliver hugs and Christmas grams to everyone present. Perhaps Ms. Hagopian’s claim wherein SMC Security preys on parked cars is true, but the reference made in regards to their appetites and “indelible marks” left by their navy uniform pants is fallacious, irrelevant and abusive. She certainly has every right to freedom of speech and expression, but allow me to say her views are not representative of the entire Saint Mary’s community. On behalf of my friends and I, please know that we are grateful for all Security has done to ensure the safety and “SMCurity” of their Belles.

Christina Grasso
 senior
 Saint Mary’s
 Nov. 11

Response to Annex SMC

As a senior at Saint Mary’s I’ve had the pleasure of enjoying four years of the “draconian, single-sex education” referenced in Annex SMC (Nov. 10). Your first incorrect assumption is that the women of Saint Mary’s share your perspective that having no male, computer science majors (sorry Mark) in their midst is somehow oppressive or relegates them to lives of mediocrity, but I digress.

Notre Dame is a storied institution with a national footprint/brand, impeccable resources, quality faculty members, a strong, supportive alumni organization, and impeccable adherence to its mission. I have the greatest respect for the history and reputation of Notre Dame. With that said, Saint Mary’s needs to give no ground to Notre Dame or to defend its academic excellence versus any other institution. Saint Mary’s has an equally commendable history of fulfilling its unique mission as a highly respected liberal arts college.

You thoughtfully pointed out many benefits to Notre Dame merging with Saint Mary’s, but did I miss the part about gains to Saint Mary’s? Having us available to help with football recruiting is the least we could do if you would allow us to join the Notre Dame family. And the addition of funds to the Sisters of Holy Cross coffers from the Notre Dame endowment ... eureka!

Of course, our lives would be forever changed by gaining the prestige of a Notre Dame degree, even though the addition of Saint Mary’s would no doubt meaningfully degrade the value of the Notre Dame brand. Dealing with the gender imbalance would, as you suggest, be a huge hurdle, but one that you could overcome with time. The women of Saint Mary’s would not think for a minute that you view Notre Dame students as being superior to the “chicks” at Saint Mary’s. From your article, it sounds like you have done your due diligence and have become intimately familiar with all the dimensions of life at Saint Mary’s. Your bio says you are a computer science major and therefore must be highly intelligent (especially compared to Saint Mary’s women) so I would not question your thought leadership on the annexation proposal.

At the same time, I do wonder about a couple things. Currently, I enjoy the best of both worlds. Notre Dame is gracious enough to provide access to academic disciplines not offered at Saint Mary’s, is willing to share a variety of resources, provides access to football and basketball tickets, and allows me to share their zip code. Our social lives at Saint Mary’s can be as intertwined as we want them to be with the Notre Dame students (you didn’t reference that but I’m sure you have been an active participant, unless you have been consumed with preparing your thoughtful presentation on the merger of Saint Mary’s and Notre Dame?). All of these points make me reflect on why it would be beneficial to be bought by Notre Dame (even though, as you point out, it is a far superior school), when I already enjoy many of its offerings. It is also hard to ignore that Saint Mary’s offers the liberal arts degree that I CHOSE to obtain, a challenging academic environment, non-need based academic scholarships, very strong alumni connections, a beautiful campus, great facilities, humility and other admirable values and the list goes on.

You do make a compelling case for annexing Saint Mary’s, Mark, and I am so thankful that you are working hard to make a difference for the less fortunate and to help enrich my life. For your efforts to help me avoid a life of quiet desperation, the opportunity to tend to my six children, and the freedom to do all I can to make life easier for my husband when he comes home from the third shift at the coal mine, I will be eternally grateful. As you already know, “ignorance is bliss.”

With respect and gratitude,

Elizabeth Cress
 senior
 Saint Mary’s
 Nov. 11

INSIDE THE ECHOES

Notre Dame Stadium turned 70 this year, but this old giant of college sports spaces still has a few surprises. Cappy Gagnon, head usher, takes Scene on a tour of the historic Stadium.



Through a door just off the stairway with the "Play Like a Champion Today" sign is a cave-like room that houses the odds-and-ends of game day: yard markers, first down chains and the cheerleaders' megaphones.

DAN JACOBS/The Observer



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

The Irish locker room used to hold only 70 players, forcing walk-ons to suit up across the street before pregame warm-ups. A room was expanded and more lockers added in the 1997 renovation.



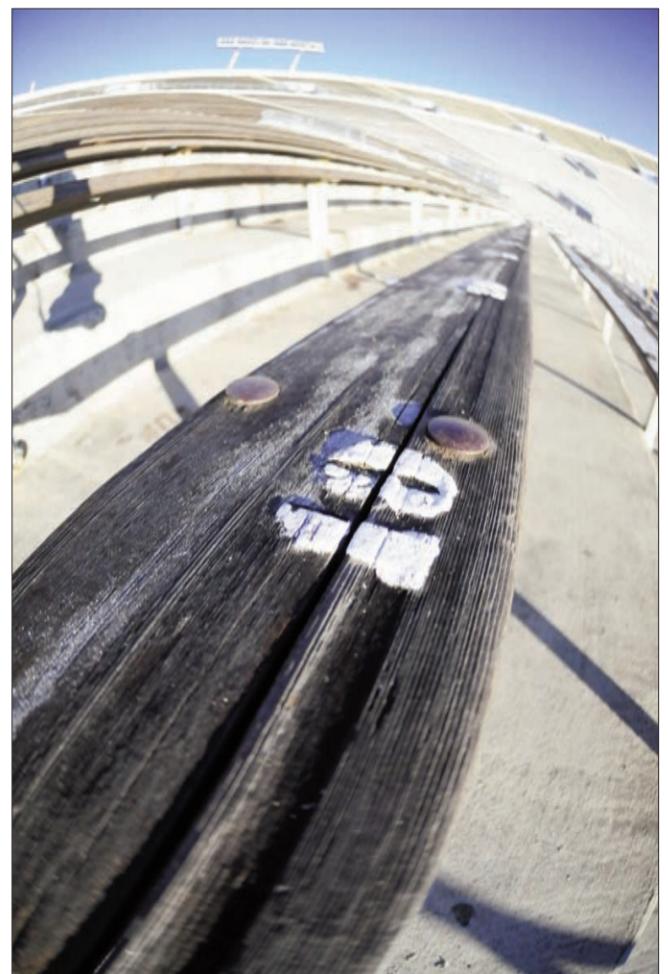
DAN JACOBS/The Observer

A set of rings awarded for national championship wins are held within Notre Dame Stadium. Because some of Notre Dame's eleven national championships were before rings were awarded for the victory, several of the rings in the display case were "retroactively" added, Gagnon says, to complete the set in the Irish locker room.



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

After the thrill of the game has passed ushers begin to clean the Stadium. They start at the top row (there are 81 in all), using leafblowers to send trash down toward the field. This is all finished by Monday afternoon, but in the meantime, sometime flocks of birds like this one sometimes descend to pick up some scraps.



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Stadium ushers inspect benches after each game to check for splits or breaks. The benches are made from California redwood, an expensive material, but one that can withstand football fans. There's a good chance some of the planks date back to Stadium's first season in 1930.



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Cappy Gagnon, right, the head usher, points out the NBC cameras that capture pregame rituals like hitting the "Go Irish Go" sign at the top of the stairs leading from the locker room to the tunnel.



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

One of the remnants of the original 1930 Stadium are the restrooms in the Irish locker room, complete with exposed pipes and a stall door that never stays closed.



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

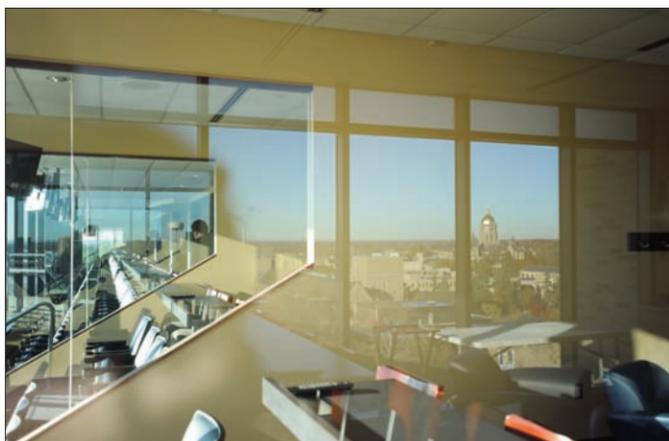
The press conference room, shown on the left, also doubles as a lounge for players past (alumni) and future (recruits). The University level of the press box, shown right, also hosts various dinners, even residence hall dances, when it's not full during football weekends.



PAT COVENEY/The Observer



DAN JACOBS/The Observer



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

In the above photo, more than 100 journalists sit on the third level of the press box to watch and report on the games. At left is the University president's private box. It comes with two great views: one of the whole field and another of the back cross campus.



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

The "Play Like a Champion Today" sign first went up during the Lou Holtz era, but now it's so much a part of tradition that a replica comes along for away games.

NFL

Colorado fires Dan Hawkins after tough loss to Kansas

Associated Press

Dan Hawkins was fired as football coach at Colorado three days after the biggest meltdown in school history put a cap on his five failed seasons with the Buffaloes.

Athletic director Mike Bohn promoted longtime assistant Brian Cabral to interim coach for the final three games of the season, beginning Saturday against Iowa State at Folsom Field.

Bohn said search for a new coach would begin immediately.

The final loss came Saturday. Colorado blew a 28-point lead at Kansas when the Jayhawks scored 35 points over the final 11 minutes for a stunning 52-45 win. It was the biggest collapse in the 121-year-old program's history.

Hawkins stepped up to the podium at a news conference Tuesday, thanking former coaches, players and team personnel as he spoke for nearly 13 minutes, ending his speech with "Go Buffs."

"I know it's been a tough time for every Buff faithful. Hopefully, we can get those things remedied," said

Hawkins, who addressed the team and informed them of his removal first thing Tuesday morning. "I really hope the negativity that might surround me doesn't surround them. They don't deserve that. It's my responsibility and I take full responsibility for that."

Quarterback Cody Hawkins, the son of Dan Hawkins, was among the seniors who addressed the media, saying he found out Sunday night.

"I had a little time to deal with it," Cody Hawkins said. "College football is a business. There are a lot of great guys in this business who kind of get put out on the street."

Dan Hawkins was one of the hottest coaches in the nation when he was brought to Boulder to replace Gary Barnett, whose tenure was marred by scandal and a 70-3 loss to Texas in the Big 12 title game after the 2005 season.

This season, the Buffs started 3-1 but have lost five in a row in the Big 12, increasing the call for Hawkins' ouster, especially after Saturday's loss when he walked out on his postgame radio interview.

"While we recognize the

progress that we have made in several areas during nearly five years under Dan, the negativity and divisiveness that is associated with the current leadership has become detrimental and is beyond repair to our current enterprise and it's time to make a change."

As for future plans, Dan Hawkins said those remain unknown.

"Life's an adventure: I've always sort of looked at it like that," he said. "I'm sure I'll coach again at some point, at some place. ... I'm going to be a passionate spectator here for the next three, hopefully four games."

Over the weekend, it appeared that Hawkins may retain his job. Bohn issued a statement Saturday night after flying back from Lawrence, Kan., that did not mention Hawkins' job status.

However, Hawkins continued to take heat for having his quarterback son throwing the ball in the fourth quarter instead of running out the clock with a big lead. Some argued Dan Hawkins was more focused about getting his son the school's all-time passing record



Dan Hawkins, pictured above after the game against Kansas, pauses after suffering a 52-45 loss on Nov. 6.

than he was about securing the win.

"Here we go again," smiled Cabral, who's hoping to be con-

sidered for the opening. "My role again is very much like last time I sat here. ... My role is to calm the storm."

NFL

Players' union rejects NFL's health care proposal

Associated Press

The players union has rejected a proposal from the NFL on long-term care for former players, saying the supplemental policy would exclude too many of them.

Miki Yaras-Davis, senior director of benefits for the NFLPA, said Thursday that the union sent a letter to the league Wednesday rebuffing the proposal that was presented during negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement. Yaras-Davis said too many former players aged 50-75 would not pass a screening by TransAmerica, the insurance company that would underwrite the plan, because those players have pre-existing conditions from playing football.

"Let's not have a select few covered," she said. "It is our belief the company will reject them ... and a significant number of seemingly healthy players will not be covered."

"We expect, as does the insurer, that 80 percent or more of retired players in this group would qualify."

Brian McCarthy
NFL Spokesman

The NFL said the policy would be available to 2,500 of 3,200 eligible players and their spouses.

"We expect, as does the insurer, that 80 percent or more of retired players in this group would qualify," NFL

spokesman Brian McCarthy said. "This means that 2,500 retired players would qualify for hundreds of thousands of dollars in long-term care benefits that they do not receive today.

"The policy has many desirable features, including a 30-40 percent discount for both play-

ers and their spouses if the spouse chooses to purchase the same coverage given to the player."

George Martin, executive director of NFL Alumni, supports the policy, calling it a first starting point toward ensuring former players have necessary health care coverage.

"I am very disappointed," said Martin, the former defensive end of the New York Giants. "There's a cadre of former ballplayers who would have passed it with flying colors."

Martin even sent a letter last month to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and NFLPA executive director

The plan would cover institutional care and home health care for up to four years, at \$150 a day. The premium would be split by the league and

the union, Yaras-Davis said.

"If you are, say, 59 years old, you know you have general health issues: high blood pressure, high cholesterol. It could be prostate cancer in that age group," she said. "With our group of players, we know they have some concussion-related mental health issues, brain trauma issues, heart-related problems. That's to say nothing of the players already permanently afflicted with arthritis."

"With our group of players, we know they have some concussion-related mental health issues."

Miki Yaras-Davis
Senior director of NFLPA

"We are looking at a group that can easily be disqualified from coverage for many things, some of which are football-related and some of which are not."

Yaras-Davis stressed that such Hall of Fame players as

John Mackey, who suffers from dementia, and Mike Haynes, who has battled prostate cancer, would not qualify for the coverage.

But the league noted that there are other policies to cover those medical issues.

"Any retiree disqualified due to dementia, ALS or another cognitive disorder will have access to the benefits of The 88 Plan," McCarthy said.

The 88 Plan, named after Mackey, provides funding from the NFL and the union to help with the care of players afflicted with dementia or related brain problems.

Martin, whose independent group is charged with confronting a variety of issues involving former players, hopes the union reconsiders.

"Why are you criticizing the source if at the end of day that source will provide an unprecedented benefit for a large group of players," he said. "It's not the wise approach; look at what that benefit will provide for the larger audience."

CLASSIFIEDS

The Observer accepts classifieds every business day from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Notre Dame office, 024 South Dining Hall. Deadline for next-day classifieds is 3 p.m. All classifieds must be prepaid. The charge is 5 cents per character per day, including all spaces. The Observer reserves the right to edit all classifieds for content without issuing refunds.

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PERSONAL

If you or someone you care about has been sexually assaulted, we can help.

For more information, visit Notre Dame's website: <http://csap.nd.edu>.

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Dennis Monokroussos is offering lessons to players of all ages and levels (local & online).

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UNPLANNED PREGNANCY? Don't go it alone. Notre Dame has many resources in place to assist you.

If you or someone you love needs confidential support or assistance, please call Sr. Sue Dunn at 1-7819 or Ann Firth at 1-2685.

For more information, visit ND's website at: <http://pregnancysupport@nd.edu>.

Glee quotes:

Kurt: You can't punch the gay out of me any more than I can punch the ignoramus out of you.

Sue: Know what kind of disgusting images I'm gonna need to stare at now to get that out of my head?

Gonna have to go to the wound care center. Gonna have to stare at some wounds.

NBA

Heat fall to Celtics again

Associated Press

MIAMI — New roster, same problem for the Miami Heat.

They just can't find a way to beat the Boston Celtics.

Ray Allen hit his first seven 3-point tries and finished with 35 points, Paul Pierce added 25 and the Celtics led wire-to-wire in a 112-107 win over Miami on Thursday night, beating the Heat for the second time this season and handing them a second straight home loss.

Boston has won 13 of the last 14 regular-season meetings in addition to eliminating Miami in the opening round of last season's playoffs. Then, the Celtics ended the LeBron James era in Cleveland a couple of weeks later, setting the wheels in motion for James, Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh to team up in Miami.

Rajon Rondo finished with 16 assists and Kevin Garnett had 16 points and 13 rebounds for Boston, which led by as many as 20.

James finished with 35 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists, narrowly missing his second straight triple-double. Wade was held to eight points on 2-for-12 shooting. The Heat got within 110-107 on Udonis Haslem's free throws with 13.3 seconds left, but Allen hit a pair of free throws to seal it.

The Celtics topped the Heat 88-80 in the season opener Oct. 26, and Miami insisted it had gotten better since then.

So, apparently, had Boston.

Allen hit seven 3-pointers for the 22nd time in his regular-season career, and there was nothing sneaky about the way he got open, either. It was as simple as

Allen running to the open spot, and waiting to see if the Celtics could get the ball to him.

When they did, he made the Heat pay. His last 3 might have been the biggest — it put Boston up 102-89 midway through the fourth quarter, and the Celtics held on from there in a frantic finish.

Haslem had 21 points and 10 rebounds for Miami, which got 13 points from Eddie House. Nate Robinson added 12 for the Celtics, who moved to 7-2.

The Celtics wasted no time taking control, making nine of their first 15 shots. Some were downright spectacular: Glen Davis set a pick on House, giving Rondo a full head of steam to blow past Bosh for a highlight-caliber dunk and a 22-10 lead.

Even the breaks went Boston's way.

Midway through the second, Rondo tried a bullet pass down the center of the court in transition, only to have Wade get a hand on the ball and tip it off the backboard. Didn't matter — Davis, remarkably agile for someone listed at 289 pounds, was running at full steam, reached back and managed to get just enough of his paw on the ball to tip it in for a 39-29 Boston edge.

By halftime, it was 61-46, and a defensive debacle that started Tuesday hadn't yet ended.

In a 53-minute stretch of basketball at home, counting the overtime against Utah, the Heat's defensive numbers were just plain offensive. They gave up 145 points on 62 percent shooting over roughly the equivalent of a full game, which wouldn't be good enough to beat any NBA club.

And certainly not the defending Eastern Conference champions.

Not the way Allen was shooting.

At times, Boston appeared to be putting on a clinic. Using only a touch pass, Rondo swung the ball crosscourt to Allen for an open 3 from the right wing. Garnett worked the two-man game with Davis to perfection. Shaquille O'Neal merely stood his ground on a drive by Wade, swatting the ball away while barely moving.

The Heat tried just about anything to get a spark. Zydrunas Ilgauskas started at center in the second half over Joel Anthony. Jerry Stackhouse and Mario Chalmers were in the rotation, as the Heat went 11-deep — something that hardly ever happens.

Nothing worked.

Even when Miami made a little run, Boston had an answer. When the Heat got within 32-28 in the second quarter, the Celtics held them to two field goals in the ensuing 5½ minutes. When Wade got his first field goal of the night early in the third, Allen scored five points in about 90 seconds to push the Boston lead to 20. And when Haslem got Miami within 97-89 with 8:17 remaining, Robinson hit a runner in the lane, followed quickly by Allen's seventh 3-pointer of the night.

Miami had one more run left, and when Wade tried a 3 with 3:33 left, the Heat nearly got within four. But the shot rattled out, Pierce made a fadeaway on the ensuing possession to push Boston's lead back to nine, and Miami's standing-room-only crowd soon began heading for the exits.

NHL

Rangers end home woes against Sabres

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Martin Biron had no intention of subbing for top Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist. That doesn't mean he wasn't ready to go once he got the late call.

Biron made 29 saves on the shortest of notice and earned his second win of the season when Artem Anisimov scored his second goal of the game 1:32 into overtime to lift New York to a 3-2 victory over the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night.

All signs pointed to this being a day off for the veteran goalie, but Biron was pressed into action when Lundqvist showed up sick.

"He said he wasn't feeling that great. I didn't know what that meant," said Biron, who played for the second time in three games. "It was about a quarter after five, a few minutes after our meeting."

"I was already in game mode. That is part of the job. If you are going to go or not, you have to be ready to go at any time."

Anisimov netted the winner after he found a loose puck in the slot for a shot past backup goalie Jhonas Enroth.

Ruslan Fedotenko had a goal and assist for the Rangers, whose offense got a big boost when top scorer Marian Gaborik rejoined the lineup after missing 12 games due to a separated shoulder. He didn't get onto the score sheet, but Gaborik recorded three shots in nearly 19 minutes of

ice time.

"We've been struggling in our building, so it's a huge win," he said. "I haven't played for three weeks, but I feel pretty good."

Tyler Ennis and Mike Grier scored for Buffalo, which lost to New York for the second time this season.

The Sabres went to overtime for the third straight game after winning the previous two in shootouts. The Sabres pulled out a 5-4 win at New Jersey on Wednesday night with Enroth in net when Devils forward Ilya Kovalchuk lost the puck off his stick without getting off a shot on the final attempt.

Enroth made 25 saves in his fourth appearance in five games in place of reigning Vezina Trophy winner Ryan Miller, who is sidelined because of a lower body injury.

Buffalo earned five of six points on its three-game road trip. The Sabres are 5-3-2 on the road, but winless at home (0-6-1).

"It's something to build off of," Enroth said. "Hopefully we can take how we play on the road back home."

The Rangers had lost two straight at home and four of five at Madison Square Garden. They appeared to be on a similar path in the third period when Fedotenko had a goal waved off because officials said the whistle was blown before the puck went into the net. Buffalo also earned its second power play with 6:06 left in regulation.

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MLB

Jeter's negotiations with Yankees going well

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Derek Jeter's grandmother has been joking that he doesn't have a job.

"Really it doesn't feel like there's anything different," the New York Yankees captain said Thursday about becoming a free agent for the first time. "I understand there's negotiations that are going to come and those sorts of things, but for me personally I don't feel any different."

Jeter and his agent, Casey Close, met with general manager Brian Cashman, managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner and team president Randy Levine on Monday in Tampa, Fla. Jeter said the meeting "set the framework" for contract negotiations and went well.

"It really wasn't that big of a deal," he said. "It wasn't like meeting people for the first time. It really wasn't that complicated."

Cashman, Jeter and fellow free agent Mariano Rivera were all together in New York on Thursday night, but not for negotiations. Before attending former manager Joe Torre's Safe At Home Foundation benefit, they couldn't avoid contract talk.

"It'd be nice to get it over with so you don't have to answer any more questions," Jeter said. "It's not just reporters. You walk down the street and people want to know, 'Come play for this team. Come play for that team.'"

Cashman described the negotiations with Jeter as in their "infancy stages."

"He wants us as much as we want him," Cashman said.

Rivera said of his contract negotiations: "I don't know anything."

Cashman's busy week also included sitting down with free-agent target Cliff Lee and his wife in Little Rock, Ark., on Wednesday. It was the first time Cashman had met the ace left-hander.

"Just seemed like a great guy that's not very excitable, excellent at what he does, knows what he wants to do," Cashman said. "Wants to put his family in the best position possible. Wants to be happy. Wants to be successful. Wants to be part of a winner."

The Yankees' competition probably will include the Texas Rangers, who acquired Lee in July and rode him to their first World Series appearance.

"This is a place that intrigues them a great deal," Cashman said of the Lees coming to New York. "But unfortunately there's other places I'm sure intrigue them as well."

Cashman also met with Jorge Posada on Monday. The 39-year-old catcher had arthroscopic surgery to repair a small tear in the meniscus of his left knee Wednesday.

"We had a good, honest, direct conversation," Cashman said. "He was professional. All he wants to do is win, and he wants to play. If things go the way we're drawing it up, he'll be in the lineup as the DH. But I told him he needs to prepare as a catcher at the same time, because it doesn't mean things will go the way you expect."

Posada was limited to 120 games last season, including 83 at catcher, as he shared time with Francisco Cervelli. Jesus Montero, a Triple-A All-Star at Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, is expected to be brought up some-

time next season. The Yankees also have another promising prospect in Double-A catcher Austin Romine.

"I'm sure he's going to want to prove that he has more games in him to catch," Cashman said. "I'm sure Montero's going to want to prove it's time for him to catch. I'm sure Romine's going through that, 'Hey, why is Montero getting all the ink? They should be writing about me.' I'm

sure Cervelli is in the middle of this thing saying, 'Hey, this is a bunch of (junk). I should be the guy they're talking about being the everyday guy.'

"It creates great competition. That's what I want."

Cashman is also searching for a pitching coach after Dave Eiland was fired following the season. The GM started interviews Thursday, talking to bullpen coach Mike Harkey and

Oakland Athletics roving pitching instructor Gil Patterson.

Cashman said that once the Yankees re-sign their free-agent stars, "I don't think there's a lot more work to be done" this off-season other than adding a starting pitcher. He's still waiting to hear from Andy Pettitte, who hasn't decided whether to play next season or retire.

But first those free agents have to be re-signed. The Yankees

must decide just how valuable Jeter is on and off the field as he comes off a season in which he hit a career-low .270 and turned 36.

"I'm glad I'm not Brian Cashman that has to put a dollar sign on it," Torre said.

Asked if other teams would pursue Jeter and Rivera, Cashman said, "Hope not. I'm sure we'll wind up paying them as if they are."

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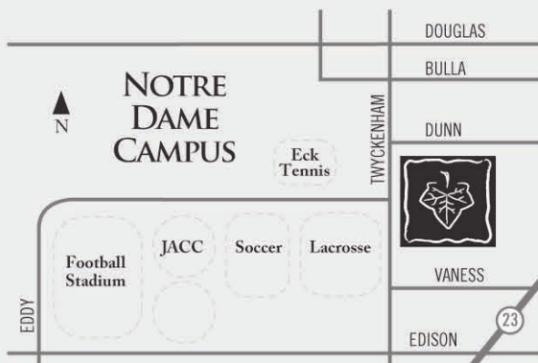
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SMC CROSS COUNTRY

Conference finish propels Belles to NCAA Championships

By MAIJA GUSTIN
Sports Writer

The Belles secured their highest-ever conference finish at the MIAA Championships and are ready to carry that momentum into the NCAA Division III Regionals.

Led by sophomore Julia Kenney, Saint Mary's followed Calvin and Hope in the MIAA Championships for a third-place finish.

"Securing third place in the conference was huge for us as a team," Belles coach Jackie Bauters said. "It was a big confidence booster and allowed the team to see what their true poten-

tial is individually and collectively."

Though Bauters says the team has had "positive feelings and success" all year, she believes the MIAA finish will help propel them forward going into regionals.

"I believe it has given them more drive to push themselves," Bauters said. "Everyone learned something different coming out of Championships that needs to be applied to the regional meet, so they have been working on their area of improvement. The team is really working on just putting all the pieces together to run the best race possible. They have all of the tools and work in place, so it's really about applying the race strategy to get them to the finish

line knowing it was a smart race, and they don't have anything left."

The Belles have several standout leaders and runners to thank for their recent success.

"I think what really distinguishes this year from other years is the cohesiveness of the team and their shared vision," Bauters said. "Our captains, [senior] Catie Salyer, [senior] Lauren Easton and [junior] Joanne Almond have really helped to keep the team focused on our goals and disciplined throughout the season."

She added, "That being said, this team is unique because everyone plays an active role in our success."

Bauters noted several top performances from the Belles at the

championships and predicts improvement going into regionals.

"Julia [Kenney] is looking to make a run at qualifying for nationals," Bauters said. "Everything in practice says she has what it takes to compete for a position, but it is going to be tough, so we're looking to see her shine whether she makes the cut or not."

"Joanne is ready to have a standout race," Bauters said. "We haven't even seen the tip of her potential yet, and I feel confident the mental preparation she's been doing will lead to a great race."

The final five should combine with Kenney and Almond for a tremendous race.

"[Sophomore] Emma [Baker],

Catie [Salyer], [senior] Sam [Wassel], [sophomore] Angela [Nebesny] and [senior] Clare [McVey] all look primed to have season best so I'm hoping they work together like they do in practice and we'll have a successful day," Bauters said.

Bauters looks to continue building records for the Belles at regionals.

"As a team our highest finish at regionals was 15th," she said. "Our goal is to be better than and my prediction is we will."

The Belles head to Hope College Saturday to take on the NCAA Division III Regionals.

Contact Maija Gustin at mgustin@nd.edu

FENCING

Two of nation's best to clash

By MATT ROBISON
Sports Writer

This weekend, the No. 1 Irish will face defending national champion Penn State in a matchup that will pin two of the best programs in the country head to head. In the NCAA Championships last season, Notre Dame finished third behind the Nittany Lions and St. John's.

The matchup with the Nittany Lions has proved to be a tough one in the past and looks to be that way again this season. Last year, the Irish earned two gold medals in the matchups, and 13 other Irish performers turned in top-10 finishes.

"Our goal is to make a couple of finals, somebody should be close to the final or medal in the top four," Irish coach Janusz Bednarski said. "It will be tough because it is a lion's cage. Penn

State are the national champions. But I believe we will make some finals."

But, it is early in the year and most fencers are just trying to get their form down to prepare for the midseason grind.

"The fall semester is mostly for individual tournaments where fencers are getting their rank by positioning the competition," Bednarski said.

On top of the matchup being an early season debut for many fencers, Notre Dame's top performers will not even be present. Sophomore Courtney Hurley and junior Ewa Nelip are in Paris this weekend for the World Championships.

That, however, should not slow the Irish down too much, according to Bednarski.

"We have a lot of good fencers that did not qualify for the national team, but they will compete well," Bednarski said.

To prepare for such a formidable foe, the Irish have been working on their form and conditioning.

"We have had some individual sparring, simulating bouts," Bednarski said. "There have been some fierce bouts. All of [the fencers] are trying to get starting positions, to get to the tournaments, to be able to be on the team."

Bednarski credited the efforts of his coaching staff, Jim Seacord, Gia Kvaratskhelia, and Marek Stepien, in preparing the Notre Dame squad.

"We have a lot of preseason conditioning programs," Bednarski said. "Coach Jim Seacord did a great job, preparing them very well. We are trying to bring them to good speed, good tactical solutions, so we will see how it will be."

The matchup gets underway this weekend Nov. 13 and 14 in University Park, Pa. The women's squad will compete Saturday, with the men following Sunday.

Contact Matt Robison at mrobison@nd.edu

"It will be tough because it is a lion cage."

Janusz Bednarski
Irish coach

NFL

Ryan leads Falcons to home win over Ravens

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Having a squandered a 13-point lead, Matty Ice and his favorite receiver looked at each on the sideline and knew what they had to do.

Take it to the end zone. Roddy White hauled in a 33-yard touchdown pass from Matt Ryan with 20 seconds remaining and the Atlanta Falcons bounced back after blowing a fourth-quarter lead, rallying past the Baltimore Ravens 26-21 Thursday in a prime-time matchup between two of the NFL's top teams.

If this was a Super Bowl preview, it's going to be quite a game in Big D.

"That might have been the most intense game I've ever been involved with at any level of football," said Falcons coach Mike Smith, a former Ravens assistant.

Baltimore appeared to be on its way to the victory when Joe Flacco threw a 9-yard touchdown pass to Todd Heap with

1:05 left.

"You think it's your game," Flacco said. "You think it's over." Not so fast.

Not with 65 seconds left for Ryan and White to work their magic.

"After they scored, we were on the sideline. We just looked at each other and smiled, man," White said. "We just relish moments like this. We knew we were going to go down there and get what we needed to win this game."

Ryan needed less than a minute to pull off an 80-yard drive, hooking up with Michael Jenkins on a huge third-down pass along the sideline before going back to his favorite receiver for the winner.

Ryan rolled to his left to get away from the pressure, and White shoved off Josh Wilson with his right hand to get free, sending the cornerback tumbling to the turf. Ryan delivered the ball perfectly. White caught it with no one around and cruised into the end zone.

Wilson hopped up, screaming for a penalty. But the official kept the yellow flag in his back pocket and held up both arms. Touchdown.

White knew he got away with one.

"Yeah, you've got to do whatever you've got to do to win," he said. "It was one-on-one coverage with one guy. But he was kind of flat-footed, and he tried to grab me, so I just pushed him down."

White was listed as questionable for the game after hurting his right knee in last Sunday's win over Tampa Bay and practicing only once during the short week. But he had a big smile when he danced out of the tunnel during the pregame introductions and clearly wasn't bothered.

He finished with 12 catches for 138 yards, giving him a staggering 70 catches for the season. Ryan threw a career-high 50 passes, completing 32 of them for 316 yards and three touchdowns.

"We've been in these situations before," said Ryan, who improved to 18-1 when starting at home. "We were confident. Nobody blinked. We just went out there and executed. We only needed three, but we got six."

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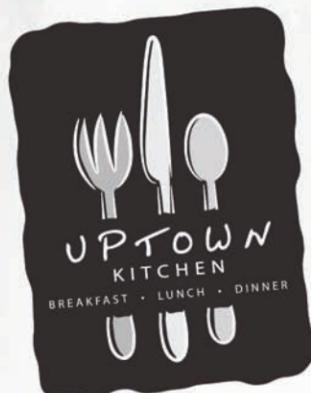
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ND CROSS COUNTRY

Runners to wrap up season

By MAIJA GUSTIN
Sports Writer

The Irish head into the final leg of their season running high after fifth- and sixth-place finishes at the Big East Championships.

Two weeks ago, the Irish men finished fifth out of 14 teams while the women ranked sixth out of 16.

Senior Dan Jackson led the No. 30 Irish men, finishing 12th overall with a time of 25:32. Freshman Martin Grady followed, finishing 20th overall in 25:59 with sophomore Jeremy Rae and junior Jonathan Shawel finishing close behind in 26th and 27th place. Junior Jordan Carlson came in 44th place and senior Mat Abernathy finished in 53rd.

Syracuse won the men's race and was followed up by Louisville, Providence and Villanova.

For the women, freshman Meg Ryan led the pack, finishing 30th. Senior Erica Watson followed in 33rd, trailed by sophomore Rebecca Tracy in 38th. Junior Rachel Velarde and freshman were Kelly Curan 42nd and 47th, respectively.

Villanova won the women's gold. Georgetown finished second while Syracuse came in third. The top five was rounded out by Providence and West Virginia.

This weekend, the Irish head



TOM YOUNG/The Observer

Senior Dan Jackson runs in the Notre Dame Invitational Oct. 1. Jackson will be running in his last collegiate race this weekend.

to Oakland University for the NCAA Great Lakes Regional. They will face a slate that includes Butler, Cincinnati, Dayton, Eastern Michigan, Indiana State, Indiana, Marquette, Miami (Ohio), Michigan, Michigan State, Oakland, Ohio State, Purdue, Toledo, Valparaiso and Wisconsin.

Wisconsin is currently ranked No. 5 in the nation on the men's side while Indiana is No. 12. For the women, Michigan State is No. 16 while Michigan is No. 18. Toledo is No. 30.

In the 2009 Regionals, the

men finished seventh overall out of 30 teams. The women won the 32-team women's race.

Velarde, Watson and Tracy all contributed to the Irish win in 2009. Velarde automatically qualified for the NCAA Championships because of this race.

Jackson, Carlson and Shawel ran in the top five for the Irish men. The men's top five in 2009 consisted of Wisconsin, Michigan State, Ohio State, Indiana and Butler.

Contact Maija Gustin at mgustin@nd.edu

NBA

Chicago routs road-weary Golden State

Associated Press

CHICAGO — Derrick Rose and the Chicago Bulls knew exactly how to take advantage of a tired opponent.

Luol Deng scored 26 points, Rose had 22 and Chicago raced to a 30-point lead in the first half en route to a 120-90 romp over the weary Golden State Warriors on Thursday night.

"When you see a team come in on a back-to-back you've got to get up on offense and get down the court and push the ball," Rose said. "It starts with the defense getting a lot of deflections, guys rebound the ball good and push it. That's when we're dangerous."

Rose added 13 assists for his third double-double of the season. He finished one assist shy of his career best, which he's increased twice already this season. Rose is handing out 9.6 assists per game, 3.3 better than he averaged in either of his first two NBA seasons.

Monta Ellis had 24 points to lead the Warriors, who pulled out a 122-117 victory in New York on Wednesday night. Stephen Curry added 17 points for Golden State, which played without ailing forward David Lee.

"We were short-handed without David," Curry said. "But

there's no excuse for playing that bad."

Bulls guard Keith Bogans had his best game of the season, with 14 points and six steals. He also did a nice job defensively of keeping Ellis under control.

"Monta is one of the best scorers in the league," Bogans said. "At practice they were killing me today, saying he might have 50 tonight."

"I went home and got ready to play. I wanted to come in and make everything tough for him. He's a great player. And they did a great job of helping me out also."

Rose and Deng combined for 39 points in a first half that Chicago dominated in every facet of the game. The Bulls outrebounded Golden State 26-20 and forced 11 turnovers (leading to 21 points) while committing only four. They out-shot the Warriors 53.1 percent to 39.1 percent.

Still, Bulls coach Tom Thibodeau said he was never really satisfied with the big lead.

"You never feel comfortable with them," Thibodeau said. "They can score quickly. I thought it was important for us to get off to a lead and play from a lead. The way they score points, you can never relax."

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MEN'S SWIMMING

Irish hope to rebound from loss to Purdue

By **JOE WIRTH**
Sports Writer

Coming off a loss to Purdue last weekend, Notre Dame will compete against the University of Utah Friday.

The Utes lost their last meet two weeks ago against Denver.

Junior Eric Bonicelli and sophomore Garret Beamen will lead the Utes at the meet after victories in their previous meet. Bonicelli won the 200-yard butterfly, while Beamen came in first in the 100-yard freestyle. The Irish will counter the Utes' attack in those races with Tylor Gauger in the 200 butterfly and Frank Dyer in the 100 freestyle.

Senior captain Mike Sullivan said that he wants this next meet against Utah as a springboard for the rest of the season.

"The team really just needs to keep doing what we're doing," Sullivan said. "We have gotten faster every meet up to this point. If we can continue that trend, we're not only going

to be in a good position for the Utah meet, but for the rest of the season including the Big East and NCAA meets."

The meet against the Utes will mark the fifth meet for the Irish. Irish coach Tim Welsh said that he looks for gradual improvement in the meets early in the season.

"We are putting all of our eggs in the improvement basket," Welsh said. "This is the last home meet this semester, so we are very excited."

The Utes have not faced the Irish since the 2005 Notre Dame Invitational and Welsh said facing an unfamiliar team is a big challenge.

"They are an unknown team from a good conference," Welsh said. "They are from altitude, so that means something."

The meet will start tomorrow at 5 p.m. at the Rolfs Aquatic Center.

Contact Joe Wirth at jwirth@nd.edu

ND VOLLEYBALL

Squad travels for final games

By **MICHAEL TODISCO**
Sports Writer

The Irish hope for a successful weekend in the Garden State, as they wrap up their regular season with conference matches on the road at Rutgers and Seton Hall.

As their season comes to a close, Irish coach Debbie Brown reflected on how her team as grown over the season.

"We made tremendous strides this year, with definite progress from week to week," Brown said.

With the Big East tournament looming and a possible NCAA Tournament berth on the line, Notre Dame's play this weekend of play will be critical to its post-season future.

"Every time we play we want to stay in a good rhythm," Brown said. "This weekend is important because [with the Big East tournament next weekend] we want to be in a position where we are going to feel good about our play."

Importantly, the Irish are peaking at just the right time in the season, according to Brown.

"We are playing our best volleyball of the season right now," Brown said. "Despite the losses, we played a really good brand of volleyball recently. We still have Big East tournament which will be an opportunity to maybe secure NCAA tournament bid which has been primary goal from onset."

The first test for the Irish (15-



TOM LA/The Observer

Senior middle blocker Kellie Sciacca signals to her teammates during Notre Dame's 3-0 loss to Northern Iowa Sunday.

11, 8-4 Big East) this weekend is Saturday against Rutgers (10-16, 2-10). Brown said the Scarlet Knights will produce a unique set of challenges for the Irish.

"Although Rutgers hasn't done as well in conference as other teams, they are a really good serving team," Brown said. "We will need to really emphasize passing and being able to get into our system of play, even on a tough serve."

Notre Dame next travels to Seton Hall (12-16, 6-6 Big East)

for a contest with the Pirates. Brown said Seton Hall's consistency makes them a difficult team to beat.

"Seton Hall is a really balanced team with great ball control ball," she said. "They typically have long rallies and don't beat themselves."

The Irish begin play at 10 a.m. Saturday against Rutgers and 2 p.m. Sunday at Seton Hall.

Contact Michael Todisco at mtodisco@nd.edu

ND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Season-opening tilt finally arrives

By **LAURA MYERS**
Sports Writer

A week and a half is a long time to go between games. No. 12 Notre Dame won't have that problem again for a while, though.

The Irish will face New Hampshire in their season-opener today, nine days after beginning their 2010 campaign with a 102-30 exhibition win over Michigan Tech on Nov. 3.

"We got our first exhibition game out of the way, and we had a scrimmage so it's kind of nice that it's real and we're starting to get into the season when we have a couple games back to back and not a week and a couple days to wait," senior captain Brittany Mallory said. "We're excited and antsy to get out there."

The contest against the Wildcats will be the first of four games over the next 10 days. Notre Dame will take on Morehead State Sunday before games against No. 16 UCLA and No. 9 Kentucky next weekend. That doesn't leave a lot of room for fine-tuning before the Irish face the ranked teams.

"It's hard because you want to have the players have a little rest but the schedule's

tight," Irish coach Muffet McGraw said. "It's very difficult because you want to watch film and work on things but you have to prepare for the next one."

The game is also the first of the season for New Hampshire, which fell 78-51 in an exhibition to Division-II Bentley Monday.

"We're definitely going to be able to outrun them in transition, and I think we're just a little bit more disciplined than they are," senior captain Becca Bruszewski said.

Bruszewski, a forward, and Mallory, a guard, took over as captains this season after all three of last year's captains graduated.

They join junior guards Natalie Novosel and Skylar Diggins and senior forward Devereaux Peters as the starters entering the season.

While Diggins and Bruszewski were starters for most of the year in 2009-10, Novosel and Mallory were strong contributors from the bench. Their promotions don't mean a lack of depth for Notre Dame, though.

"I think every one of the starting five will set the tone for the whole team," Mallory

said. "We've got a couple freshmen on the bench who are going to come in, we have [sophomore guard] Kaila Turner who's been working her butt off in practice. It's a whole team effort."

Against Michigan Tech, freshman guard Kayla McBride finished with 14 points and eight rebounds, while freshman forward Natalie Achonwa led the team with nine rebounds. McGraw said the two would be a significant part of the team.

"I was counting on them to be able to contribute right away," McGraw said. "We lost a lot from last year's team and we needed someone to come in at both the guard spot and the post. From what I've seen so far, I'm really pleased with them."

Despite the lopsided score against Michigan Tech, Notre Dame had plenty to work on, including zone offense and man-to-man defense, McGraw said.

"We felt there's some things we could do fundamentally," she said.

That may be all the time they have to go through the basics for a while, which McGraw said is fine with her team.

"From the players' perspective, generally there's too much practice and not enough games," McGraw said. "They're definitely ready to get to the games."

Contact Laura Myers at lmeyers2@nd.edu

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WOMEN'S ROWING

Fall season concludes with Ohio St. scrimmage

By CORY BERNARD
Sports Writer

The Irish will conclude their fall season Sunday against Big Ten competitors Michigan State, Ohio State and Indiana in a scrimmage hosted by the Buckeyes in Columbus.

Coming off a scrimmage last weekend against the Hoosiers, Notre Dame will face a tougher lineup this weekend, according to Irish coach Martin Stone.

"We're scrimmaging against two teams who were in the NCAAs last year — Michigan State and Ohio State," he said. "We're excited to face some very, very fine programs."

The scrimmage format allows the Irish to test various crew combinations in true racing format against tough competition without any of the results actually counting. Stone said his squad is eager to improve upon last week's showing.

"We're excited. We're looking to row a little faster than last weekend and move

along," Stone said.

Stone also praised the efforts of his rowers in practice this week as they prepared for the final event before the winter offseason.

"I like the way people are rowing," he said. "All week long the kids have been rowing very nicely. It's been going well."

Stone has another reason to be confident this week. Amanda Polk, a former rower of Stone's and a 2008 Notre Dame graduate, won a gold medal with the United States eight at the 2010 World Championships on Lake Karapiro in New Zealand Saturday.

Polk now has four international medals to her credit, including three golds.

"It's really great for the program to have a graduate as a world champion," Stone said. "We're all very proud of her."

Races for the current version of Irish women's rowing begin Sunday at 12 p.m. in Columbus, Ohio.

Contact Cory Bernard at
cbernard@nd.edu

ND WOMEN'S SWIMMING

Irish to face Utah in the pool Friday in dual

By MICHAEL TODISCO
Sports Writer

Before Notre Dame battles Utah on the gridiron Saturday, the two schools will meet Friday at the Rolfs Aquatic Center for a showdown in the pool.

Notre Dame will be looking to rebound from a narrow defeat last weekend against Purdue, in which the meet was decided in the final relay. Senior leader Samantha Maxwell hopes the team can make an important mental adjustment coming off the loss to the Boilermakers for the Utah meet.

"When we swam Purdue last week, they came at us from the very start," Maxwell said. "Going into Utah we need to make sure that as a team we are engaged in every race, whether we are physically swimming the race, or cheering on a teammate."

Maxwell and the Irish are looking forward to a challenging meet against the Utes, which will be the final dual meet for Notre Dame as

well as parent's weekend.

"Utah should be exceptional competition for us," Maxwell said. "They have some very talented swimmers on their squad that are coming to race for a win. It should be a fun meet to compete in and our team is excited to host them on our parents' weekend."

"Utah should be exceptional competition for us."

Samantha Maxwell
Irish senior

The team focused on team unity this week in practice. Maxwell stressed that team cohesion will help the Irish as a unit during meets.

"Our focus this week has been on training hard and backing each other up in workouts," Maxwell said. "If we are able to invest in each other's training, we will be invested in each other's swims at our meets. It is important for everybody to be involved in their teammate's swims, helping them through challenges and celebrating their successes."

The meet begins Friday at 5 p.m. at Rolfs Aquatic Center.

Contact Michael Todisco at
mtodisco@nd.edu

Waldrum

continued from page 24

have been really good for us."

In order to encourage attendance, admission to Friday's contest will be free for all Notre Dame students. Attendance for the matchup with the Huskies was just 416, and Waldrum said that home-field advantage was simply not a factor in the game.

Waldrum did, however, mention that the early exit from the conference tournament did give the coaching staff an opportunity to evaluate personnel decisions, hinting that a couple of lineup changes could be in effect for Friday's tilt.

"We looked at some of the personnel we were using," Waldrum said. "While we were a little reluctant to make changes because we were winning, I think sometimes when you lose like we did, and then a few weeks where you haven't been great, it makes it easier to make those changes."

No. 4 seeded Notre Dame (15-2-2, 9-0-2 Big East) has never faced New Mexico (12-2-5, 5-0-2 Mountain West), but the Irish have won their previous two NCAA opening-round matchups against first-time opponents Toledo and IUPUI.

"You don't really know how [the Lobos] are going to come out, because it's their first time in," Waldrum said, "but I think you expect them to come out just flying and just happy to be here. One thing we've seen in watching game tape is they're a very well organized team defensively."

Led by sophomore Kelli Cornell between the pipes, the Lobos have maintained a 0.39 goals against average and a .913 save percentage, giving them the second-ranked defense in the nation.



NICOLE TOCZAUER/The Observer

Senior goalkeeper Nikki Weiss goes up for a save during Notre Dame's 2-0 loss to Connecticut Oct. 31.

While the past two weeks has given the squad a chance to refocus and prepare for New Mexico, Notre Dame's greatest advantage may be a healthier Courtney Barg. The junior midfielder missed the majority of the regular season due to injury, but showed signs of regaining her form in limited minutes during the final stretch of the season.

"She's getting closer," Waldrum said. "I think we were a little worried with the number of minutes she played on previous weekends, but I think she's getting closer to being able to play 90 minutes in every game. She's getting awful close to being where she needs to be for the rest of the way."

A victory on Friday sends the Irish into a second-round match against the winner of the contest between Illinois and Southern California earlier in the day.

While North Carolina will be

competing in the same region, Waldrum is confident in his team's ability to compete and win on the road, especially in Chapel Hill, N.C. The Irish have won three of the last four contests at North Carolina, including a victory in the third-round of the NCAA Championships in 2007.

"If you're going to win a national championship, you have to beat them [the Tar Heels] somewhere along the way, whether it's going to be in the third round or the championship game," Waldrum said. "I hate that cliché about one game at a time, but really at this time of the year you better just focus on that next game or you could be in trouble."

The Irish take the field Friday at 7:30 p.m. at Alumni Stadium. Sunday's second-round matchup will be at 1 p.m.

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Senior guard Ben Hansbrough passes to a teammate during Notre Dame's 72-47 exhibition win over Catholic Nov. 6.

SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

Brey

continued from page 24

at one level and they probably should be because they've been in our program for three or four years, and they've all been in college four or five years and certainly that's a great advantage.

"I think the first thing is Scott Martin has learned to play well with them and they've learned to bring Scott Martin along because they know how much we need him," Brey continued. "That was the first order of business as we got into practice — getting him comfortable, getting him confident."

The Irish are also looking for freshman guard Eric Atkins to contribute while running Notre Dame's offensive attack.

"I'm really thrilled with where [Atkins is] at — he's done everything we've asked him to do," Brey said.

Georgia Southern, who plays in the aptly named Southern Conference, has never faced Notre Dame, but the Irish are 19-1 all-time against Southern Conference foes. The team's only conference loss was a 54-51 loss to Davidson in the 1982-83 season.

The Eagles won their lone exhibition game 59-55 against Fort Valley State last Friday. In that game, they started three freshmen along top with junior Ben Drayton III and senior Rory Spencer, Georgia Southern's second and third ranked returning



Freshman guard Eric Atkins pushes the ball upcourt during Notre Dame's 72-47 win over Catholic Nov. 6.

JULIE HERDER/The Observer

scorers. Top scorer Willie Hanson didn't play in the contest.

On Sunday, Notre Dame will face Liberty for their second matchup in as many years, with the Irish winning 91-72 last season. The Flames return a young squad that features just five upperclassmen. Their top returning player is junior captain Jesse Sanders, who started all 31 games for the Flames a year

ago, and sophomore guard Evan Gordon, Liberty's top returning scorer with 12 points per game and brother of former Indiana standout Eric Gordon.

The Irish will tipoff against the Eagles at 8:30 p.m. Friday and Sunday at 2 p.m. against Liberty at the Purcell Pavilion.

Contact Mike Gotimer at mgotimer@nd.edu



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Learn more about the Irish Green at <http://gameday.nd.edu/campus/rally-on-the-green/>

IRISH GREEN

Jackson

continued from page 24

play to a higher level.

"It's always a challenge playing at Yost, because it is an intimidating place," he said. "I've always thought our team relished playing there."

More importantly, however, will be the Wolverine (5-2-3, 4-1-1-0 CCHA) on-ice challenge, as Michigan is one of the deepest, most well-rounded teams the Irish will face all season.

"Obviously the crowd's against you, but you have to be more concerned about the talent Michigan brings to the

table," Jackson said. "I think Michigan has got the best depth up front, on the back end they're a great defensive team."

The Wolverines play a fast-paced, up-tempo game that has given Notre Dame some problems earlier this season. The Irish got off to poor starts against similar attacking philosophies from Boston College and Boston University earlier this year.

"I know they're very skilled and very fast. I just expect

them to play very good and very fast hockey," Ridderwall said. "We try to practice at a very fast pace, and that's the main thing we're doing to prepare."

Jackson wants his team to counter speed with speed.

"We want to go at them. We don't want to sit back,"

he said. "I think our team is a little more capable of playing that up-tempo style against a team like that than maybe we've been in the past."

The Irish and Wolverines

currently rank first and second at the top of the CCHA, and though it's early in the season, the game could have major implications later on during what is shaping up to be a wide-open season.

"In the CCHA it seems like anyone can beat anyone," Ridderwall said. "All the points are important, especially against the teams that are contending for the top four spots."

The key for the Irish will be limiting costly mistakes that turn into odd-man situations.

"We're going to have to play extremely well to have any type of success," Jackson said. "They thrive on transition and

if you make bad plays with the puck, they're going to burn you, so you have to be really responsive and intelligent, making sure that you minimize the number of turnovers that you make."

The Irish will be cognizant of the meaning of this weekend's series.

"It's always different, you know, Notre Dame and Michigan — in any sport," Ridderwall said.

Notre Dame and Michigan clash Friday and Saturday in Ann Arbor at 7:35 p.m. each night.

Contact Allan Joseph at ajoseph2@nd.edu



Sophomore midfielder Dillon Powers shoots on goal during Notre Dame's 2-1 victory over Marquette Nov. 6. PAT COVENEY/The Observer

Sutton

continued from page 24

The No. 11 Irish (10-4-4, 6-2-1 Big East) are seeded No. 2 in the Blue Division of the tournament, just behind the undefeated No. 1 Cardinals (15-0-2, 9-0), who are at the top of the conference rankings.

"Playing a team like Louisville could do good things for our confidence and do good things going down the stretch," Sutton said. "So going through the whole season winning the Big East Tournament would mean a lot to us going into the national tournament."

This is the fourth year in a row that the Irish make a semifinal appearance in the conference tournament, and their eighth trip overall to the semifinals.

Notre Dame and Louisville have played each other for the last two years in the conference semifinals. Last year, the Irish won 4-3 on penalty kicks, and in 2008 the Irish won 1-0.

The Cardinals and the Irish met once earlier in the season in Louisville, Ky., where the Irish fell 2-0. Though the teams were tied 0-0 in the first half, Louisville notched both of their goals in the second half to win the game.

"The game has kind of been built up since we played Louisville last," Sutton said. "They took it to us a little bit. We've been looking forward to this game to get our second chance that them. Hopefully we take advantage of it."

Though Louisville will be a challenging competitor, the Cardinals have the task of

breaking Notre Dame's current five-game win streak.

If the Irish win, they will take on the either No. 1-seeded Cincinnati or No. 5-seeded Providence.

The match will be aired live on CBS College Sports at 7:30 p.m.

"We had our training session today. Everyone practiced. Everyone was looking great. It's all up to us now," Sutton said.

Contact Molly Sammon at msammon@nd.edu

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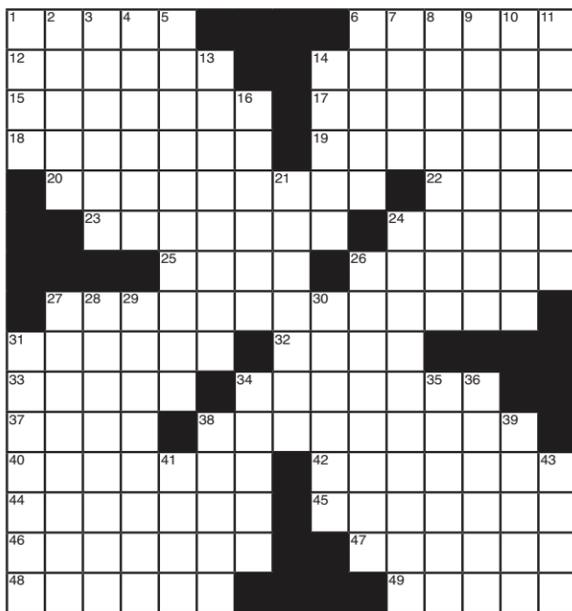


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CROSSWORD

WILL SHORTZ

- Across**
- 1 Use a joystick
 - 6 Biblical figure who received the curse of Ham
 - 12 Somewhat astringent, as wine
 - 14 What a yo-yo might make
 - 15 City where A.A. was founded
 - 17 Like collision avoidance systems
 - 18 "Driving Miss Daisy" setting
 - 19 Conservative pundit with a daily morning radio show
 - 20 Popular bar since 1946
 - 22 "I never ___ moor": Emily Dickinson
 - 23 Delivery that may floor you
 - 24 One doing laundry, often
 - 25 Wrap in sheets
 - 26 They're on the books
 - 27 The great Pretender?
 - 31 Things to come to grips with?
 - 32 Sound made while working on a mop
 - 33 Basketball shooting game
 - 34 Maximally intense
 - 37 "Alice ___ It Again" (Noel Coward song)
 - 38 Pantry
 - 40 What a compact often lacks
 - 42 Green
 - 44 Reply to a pushy person
 - 45 Think worthy of doing
 - 46 Change, at times
 - 47 Turned down
 - 48 What big projects are usually done in
 - 49 Tough row to hoe?
- Down**
- 1 One way to go to a party
 - 2 Lead-in to bath or powder
 - 3 Join
 - 4 Massive, in Marne
 - 5 Country standard that begins "Love is a burning thing"
 - 6 Quail flock
 - 7 Words of clarification
 - 8 Strip teaser?
 - 9 Toughened
 - 10 Seemingly
 - 11 Workers may be drawn to them
 - 13 What can give you a heads-up?
 - 14 Big shot
 - 16 Some pilgrims
 - 21 Lake Chapala's state



- Puzzle by Brendan Emmett Quigley
- 24 Ordered programming
 - 26 Bleached
 - 27 Like an owl's eyes
 - 28 Set of cursive Japanese symbols
 - 29 Fix, as a bow
 - 30 Toughened
 - 31 Big name in home theaters
 - 34 ___ Energy (big natural gas utility)
 - 35 Elegantly groomed
 - 36 It's worth a couple of bucks in Canada
 - 38 Acoustics measures
 - 39 Soft, now
 - 41 His vet is Liz Wilson
 - 43 Rolls out for sale at a nursery

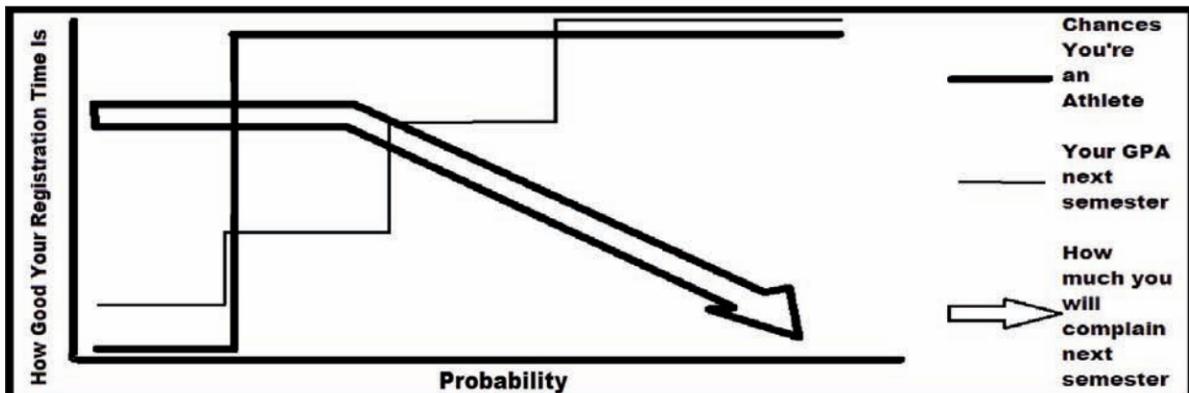
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Happy Birthday: You have plenty to gain this year but don't neglect your health, well-being or a relationship that means a lot to you. You will see greater returns if you are patient and practical, working strategically toward your goal. Surround yourself with people who get what you are trying to do. Your numbers are 10, 18, 22, 24, 35, 38, 46

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Take action, respond quickly and don't let anyone bully you into something that doesn't sit right with you. An emotional issue must not be allowed to hinder a decision you need to make. ★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Take a close look at what's being offered. Before you make an agreement, make sure there isn't something that needs changing. Someone will try to mislead you with charm and fast talk. Stay on top of your game. ★★★★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You'll be charged up and ready to go. Set your target and make your move. Your fast-paced, aggressive action will give you the upper hand when it comes to getting your way. A creative idea will be successful. ★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Financial discussions will pay off in terms of what you can earn or invest in a project that catches your interest. Taking care of money matters will allow you greater freedom to make decisions that need to be addressed on the spot. Make your move. ★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Address the changes that need to be taken care of at home. Re-decorate or make your surroundings user-friendly. Interacting with progressive and productive individuals will aid you in advancing, as well. ★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You may feel like throwing your weight around verbally but it isn't likely to unfold the way you anticipate. Arguments are apparent if you are abrupt or controlling. Rethink and reconsider. Focus more on having fun. ★★★★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Talks will pay off if dealing with friends, neighbors or relatives. However, problems at home will prevail if you don't compromise. Concentrate on expanding a creative idea or working on a self-improvement project that will bring you greater confidence. ★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): There is plenty to be hopeful about but first you must believe in yourself and your skills. Broaden your awareness and the possibilities will be endless. Sudden and unexpected change will put you in a prime position. ★★★★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Your fiery attitude will bring about changes that will not be that easy to control. Someone from your past will cause problems for you personally or professionally. Don't take chances, but listen carefully. ★★

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Don't jump to conclusions when staying calm and letting others react will position you better. There is money to be made if you readdress and update old ideas or projects. Embrace change and opportunity will present itself. ★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): A secret must be kept if you want to avoid a costly problem. You need to make a decision so you aren't accused of standing in the way of progress. It's in your best interest to take part in what's going on around you instead of ignoring the inevitable. ★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Avoid making promises or signing up for something that is probably a waste of time. Be creative with your finances and you will be able to come up with a plan that will increase your earning power and lower your overhead. ★★★★★

Birthday Baby: You are practical but adaptable if something appears to be better than what you already have. You strive for knowledge and don't leave anything to chance.

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Yesterday's Jumbles: GAVEL FUNNY POPLIN HEIFER
 Answer: When the comedian gained weight, he tried to — LAUGH IT OFF

FOOTBALL

Two quarterback recruits to visit campus this weekend

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Editor

One game removed from losing its starting quarterback for the season, Notre Dame now has two four-star quarterback recruits visiting for the weekend.

North Carolina verbal commitment Everett Golson announced his plans to visit earlier in the season, but Florida native Jacoby Brissett only announced his plans Thursday, after this week's "Irish

Insider" had gone to print.

"[Brissett] is another four-star, big-time quarterback," said Mike Frank, an Irish recruiting analyst who runs the ESPN-affiliated irishsportsdaily.com. "He can run, but he also comes from more of a pro-style offense in high school."

"He just came back from watching the LSU vs. Alabama game, and has an LSU offer, so this is a big-time player," Frank said. "I think he just wants to check [Notre Dame] out. He is a good student, and let's be honest, this is a very

good opportunity for a quarterback. With [Irish junior quarterback] Dayne [Crist] out, a quarterback could come in and have a chance to play right away, and every quarterback is looking for that opportunity."

Joining the quarterbacks in visiting this weekend is an offensive tackle who could someday be protecting them. Frank said Jay Whitmire could fit in well with the type of recruiting class Irish coach Brian Kelly and his staff are putting together.

"He's a guy who's a pretty big kid and plays physical at the point of attack," Frank said. "Notre Dame has kind of struggled in the run game, so they need to get that nasty disposition on the offensive line, and I think that is what they see in Whitmire."

Whitmire, Golson and Brissett could join a recruiting class that includes numerous four-star recruits such as running back Justice Hayes and defensive end Stephon Tuitt.

"There are a lot of fantastic play-

ers in this class," Frank said. "But more importantly, what exists in this class that I don't think has previously, it is a class full of tough kids, that are very physical and can run. I think the one thing Brian Kelly is really trying to fix is the tough mentality you need to have to win games at this level. From that standpoint, he couldn't do a better job of getting that kind of player who will turn this around."

Contact Douglas Farmer at dfarmer1@nd.edu

ND WOMEN'S SOCCER

Road to the Cup

Irish host New Mexico in NCAA first round

By CHRIS MASOUD
Sports Writer

While the aftermath of a loss can follow a team into its next matchup, the Irish take the pitch on Friday with a simple motivating factor — one more loss and the season is over. Notre Dame will take on New Mexico in the first round of the NCAA Championships, the first time the team has laced up its cleats since a 2-0 loss to Connecticut in the quarterfinals of the Big East Championships on Oct. 31.

"The two weeks have been really good — probably our two best weeks of training," Irish coach Randy Waldrum said. "I've never been a big believer in losing is a good thing. I would rather have won and have gone on and won the conference tournament. But since we didn't, I think the two weeks

see WALDRUM/page 20



Junior midfielder Courtney Barg evades Connecticut defenders during Notre Dame's 2-0 Big East quarterfinal loss Oct. 31. The Irish will attempt to rebound Friday against New Mexico.

PAT COVENEY/The Observer

MEN'S SOCCER

Conference semifinals loom large

By MOLLY SAMMON
Sports Writer

The Irish will play Friday in the Big East Championship Semifinal game against the top team in the country, the Louisville Cardinals, at Red Bull Arena in Harrison, N.J., home of the New York Red Bulls. A win would send the Irish to the conference finals for the 14th time in program history.

"Tomorrow's game is going to be huge, the biggest game of our season so far," junior midfielder Chris Sutton said. "Louisville is a team we want to play and we want to beat. Louisville has been growing as a program, they're getting better everyday. We'll be ready to play, they'll be ready to play. It'll be one of the most exciting games in the country."

see SUTTON/page 22

HOCKEY

Notre Dame to face Michigan

By ALLAN JOSEPH
Sports Writer

No. 11 Notre Dame renews its oldest hockey rivalry this weekend when it travels to Ann Arbor to take on CCHA rival No. 8/9 Michigan.

The trip will take the Irish (6-2-1/4-1-1-1 CCHA) to one of college hockey's most inhospitable venues, Yost Arena.

"The fans are right over you, so it's a great experience," Irish senior alternate captain Calle Ridderwall said. "You know what you're getting yourself into. I think it's very motivating going into Yost."

Notre Dame coach Jeff Jackson agreed with Ridderwall, and said the hostile atmosphere helps his team

see JACKSON/page 22



Sophomore center Riley Sheahan chases after the puck during Notre Dame's 3-2 victory over Western Michigan Oct. 29.

WU YUE/The Observer

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Georgia Southern first up in regular season

By MIKE GOTIMER
Sports Writer

Notre Dame kicks off its regular season against Georgia Southern Friday in its first Division I game of the post-Harangody era.

Although the Irish will be without one of the greatest players in program history, Irish coach Mike Brey knows that his team is up to the challenge of playing without Harangody.

"One of my themes for this group has been, 'We did it for six games in 2009-10 without Luke, now can we do it for six months?'" Brey said before the season to

und.com. "I am excited and feel good about what this group can accomplish this year."

In order for the Irish to be successful this season, they will look to a number of newcomers to fill in production voids left by the departures of Harangody and former point guard Tory Jackson. Entering the season, Brey said getting senior guard Scott Martin up to speed with Notre Dame's returning starters was a top priority.

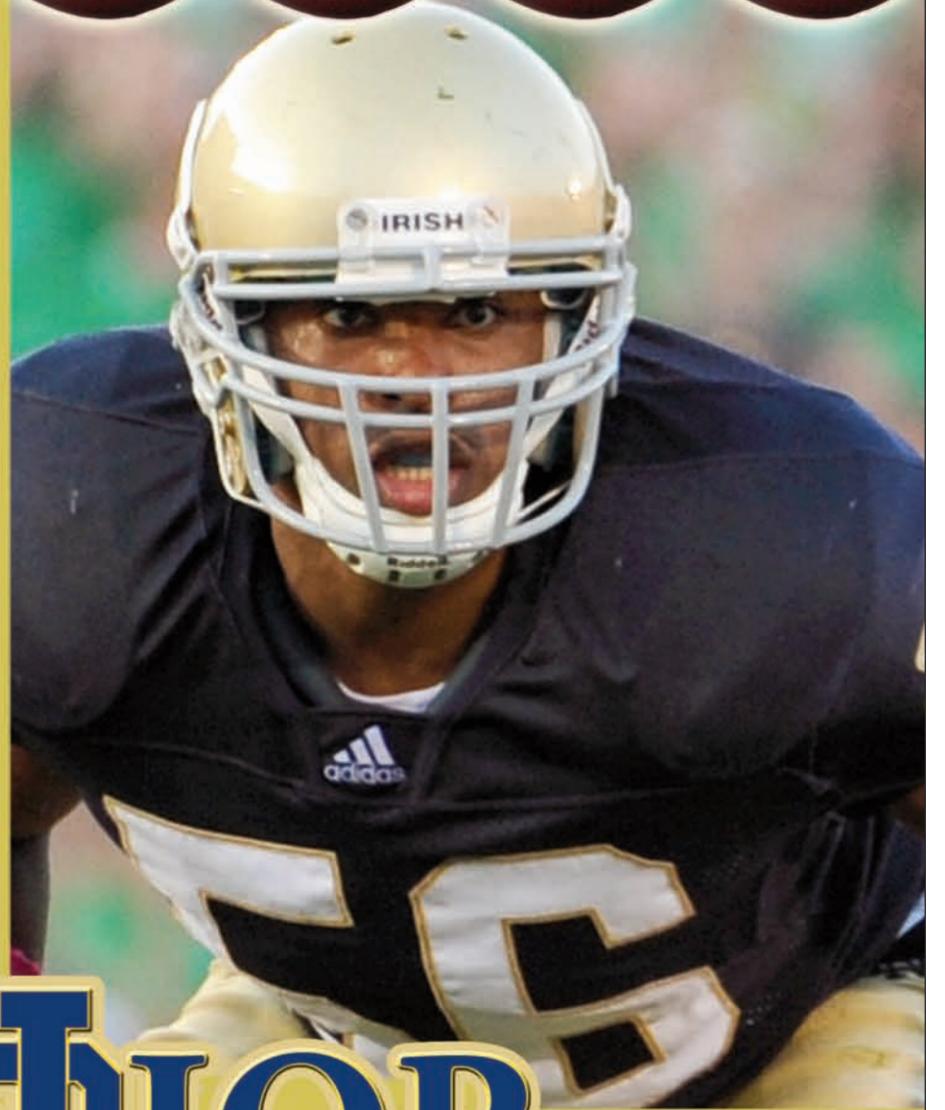
"Our five guys that start are pretty good together," Brey said. "They're kind of

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IRISH INSIDER

Friday, November 12, 2010

THE
OBSERVER



SENIOR DAY



Graphic Illustration by Blair Chemidlin

COMMENTARY

A chance to make a Senior Day count

When these seniors signed their letters of intent to play for Notre Dame in February 2007, the Irish were coming off back-to-back BCS bowl appearances and had gone 19-6 over the past two seasons.

Four seasons later, it seems that nothing has gone according to plan.

Despite their struggles on the field, 15 of those 18 seniors that signed on 3 1/2 years ago are still on the Irish roster

today. Going through the worst season in Notre Dame history and a tumultuous coaching change would have made it easy for players to transfer elsewhere. Frankly, who could have blamed them?

Transfers are usually a staple of coaching changes and, especially given the poor performance on the field it would have been easy for players to look at other schools. Two players

transferred when Brian Kelly took over for Charlie Weis as Irish coach — one for reasons unrelated to football. While Kelly himself probably played some role in that high retention rate, this senior class banded together through the adversity. That attitude permeated throughout the rest of the team and, hopefully, laid the foundation for stability and success down the road.

This senior class proves the axiom on which Notre Dame most prides itself — that it's different from all other football programs. When things aren't going well on the field, there's somewhere else to turn here. If football were all that mattered, most of these players would have hit the road years ago. More importantly, they wouldn't reflect glowingly when asked about their experience at Notre Dame. Talking to players over the past week, the most common theme is how they're going to miss this place when they leave.

"[What made Notre Dame special] was just the things [it] offered to better myself as a human being, better myself as a student, to challenge myself," senior running back Robert Hughes said.

Even though these past four

years haven't been what any of us — players, students and fans included — had hoped for, there's still the possibility to end it on the highest note possible. It would be poetic, almost, if these seniors earned their first win over a ranked team on Senior Day, a day that has recently become an embodiment of Notre Dame's struggles.

No, I don't think it's likely that the Irish will beat Utah on Saturday, but both teams will still have to take the field for 60 minutes, and — if we have learned anything over the past four years — anything can happen. If the Irish do manage to pull off the upset Saturday, it would become a vindication for everything this class has worked for over the past four years and lay the groundwork for future victories, a common theme in recent interviews with both coaches and seniors alike.

As important as the future is, though, it's even more essential that these seniors take ownership of their Senior Day Saturday. The most disappointing part of previous Senior Days wasn't even the losses to mediocre Big East teams, but

the lackluster demeanor on the Irish sidelines on what is supposed to be the most emotional game on the schedule. Maybe it will help that Notre Dame will be playing a top-25 team, but these seniors, and the team as a whole, need to play like Senior Day means something to them. If they can harness that emotion, maybe, just maybe, this class will finally experience an elusive "Notre Dame moment."

No, a win over Utah wouldn't be the same as beating a top-ranked USC team, but you can only play the games in front of you. After everything this class has been through, though, a win over a ranked team is something to celebrate, regardless of the logo on its helmet.

The Class of 2011 won't win a national championship at Notre Dame. The seniors won't even graduate with anything close to a winning record, but that doesn't mean they can't go out with a bang.

It's hard to say they don't deserve it.

The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.

Contact Sam Werner at swerner@nd.edu



Sam Werner

Sports Writer

After everything this class has been through, though, a win over a ranked team is something to celebrate, regardless of the logo on its helmet.

FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Decommitments open up slots

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Editor

After two losses on the field, Irish coach Brian Kelly and his staff suffered three more losses in their first attempt at a full recruiting class while at Notre Dame.

Three four-star recruits, offensive tackle Jordan Prestwood, linebacker Clay Burton and defensive end Aaron Lynch, opted out of their verbal commitments to the Irish in the past two weeks.

"I think there are a lot of things players are looking for when they make that commitment," said Mike Frank, an Irish recruiting analyst who runs the ESPN-affiliated site irishsportsdaily.com. "One is a good education, and another is they want to play for a big-time football program that gives you a chance to play for a national championship. And obviously, third, like any college student you want to have fun. I think for Notre Dame to get to that point, they are going to have to start winning some games."

While Frank said the string of bad luck Kelly and the Irish have undergone is unlike any he has ever seen — from injuries to fake field goals to more injuries — he thinks recruits are failing to see the effects of that ill fortune.

"Kids are looking at it and saying that 'I want to go to a program that can win a national championship,'" he

said. "They just aren't looking at the big picture and seeing why Notre Dame is losing."

The decommitments from the three heralded recruits, all given a four-star ranking by ESPN's recruiting analysts, likely eliminates any chance of them coming to Notre Dame, Frank said.

"Once these guys decide to take visits, almost always the original school is out," he said. "All three of them have confirmed to us that Notre Dame is out of the running."

The decommitments also opened up three more slots for other recruits. Fittingly, three recruits, two of which are four-star recruits as well, will visit campus this weekend and take in the Utah game from the sidelines.

Defensive end Brennan Scarlett, an Oregon native, could fill the spot left by Lynch. Scarlett, heavily recruited by most of the schools in the Pac 10, has long shown an interest in Notre Dame, Frank said.

"He's a big-time player," Frank said. "He's been interested in Notre Dame for quite some time, and I think Notre Dame has a real good shot at him too. It's his first time out here, and we'll have to see what he thinks, but he is the kind of kid who I think will fit in well with the type of personalities already on the team."

Four-star quarterback, and North Carolina commit, Everett Golson will also be in town over the weekend. With the recent season-ending

injury to Irish junior quarterback Dayne Crist, Golson could take advantage of an uncertain Notre Dame quarterback situation, Frank said.

"With the situation with Dayne being out, and they aren't exactly sure if he'll be back or not for the spring, this is an ideal situation for a quarterback," Frank said. "And [Golson] wants to enroll early, so he would be here for spring football."

"The thing that Golson brings that a Tommy Rees doesn't, is that Golson is a tremendous athlete. He can run, and that has been one of the biggest problems of Notre Dame's offense this year — you have to have a quarterback that can run."

Also visiting campus this weekend are three-star recruit, and offensive lineman, Jay Whitmire and four-star recruit, and Irish commit, offensive lineman Matt Hegarty.

"[Hegarty] is obviously huge to this class. His talent is immense," Frank said. "He is a perfect left tackle with a nasty disposition ... I personally think he is one of the top two or three players in this class."

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out Mike Frank's irishsportsdaily.com.

E-mail Mike at mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net and tell him The Observer sent you.

Contact Douglas Farmer at dfarmer1@nd.edu

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IAN WILLIAMS

Williams leads D-line until suffering MCL sprain

By SAM WERNER
Sports Writer

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the Sept. 24 edition of The Observer.

Ask any football coach what the most important position is in a 3-4 defense is, and the response is almost unanimous.

No matter how talented the other players are, a defense will likely struggle without an effective nose guard to clog the middle of the line.

For the Irish, that responsibility falls on senior Ian Williams.

"We've given him an opportunity to play something that he's good at," defensive line coach Mike Elston said. "He's on the center, whipping him. He's using really good technique. He's clued into indicators. He's just doing a really nice job, and it's important to him."

New system, new position

Williams entered Notre Dame out of Altamonte Springs, Fla., in 2007 as one of ESPN's top 150 high school players. Recruited to play nose tackle in then-defensive coordinator Corwin Brown's 3-4 system, Williams played in all 12 games his freshman year, starting two. He totaled 45 tackles on the year and was named a Freshman All-American.

Since that first year, though, the Irish defense has switched defensive coordinators twice, and moved to defensive coordinator Jon Tenuta's 4-3 scheme in 2009. The switch meant that Williams had to move to defensive tackle, and away from his natural position.

When new Irish coach Brian Kelly hired defensive coordinator Bob Diaco this off-season, it meant that Notre Dame was switching back to the 3-4, and Williams was moving back to the middle.

While much has been made about the schematic changes, Williams said he was more excited about the new attitude the coaching staff brought.

"I knew a little bit about them, just watching Cincinnati and some of their games last year. I kind of read up on Coach Kelly, Coach Diaco, Coach Elston when they got hired," Williams said. "I was really excited for the opportunity to have a new coaching staff and just try something new, start fresh."

Williams said the technical changes on the Notre Dame defense weren't as big a deal to him.

"It doesn't make that much of a difference to me," he said. "I'll play what I need to play. Defense is defense. I know I've said that plenty of times, but I'm just trying to go out there and have fun on every play."

In addition to Diaco, Kelly also hired strength and conditioning coach Paul Longo, who Williams said has been invaluable to his development.

"It's all paying off," Williams said before Notre Dame met Stanford on Sept. 25. "I mean, we're 1-2 right now, but I think it's paying off and we're getting better."

Old man on the line

In addition to Williams' responsibilities on the field, he's also the senior man on the Irish defensive line this season.

"I'm the old guy in the group now," Williams said. "So I just feel like I have to be a role model for the younger guys."

Elston said that Williams has been taking charge by his attitude in practice, as well.

"He's been a leader, he's been working hard," Elston said. "Not a day goes by that I think he's wasting his time, wasting our time. He's been doing a nice job. He's locked in and having fun too."

Williams said that over the off-season, he had freshman defensive lineman Bruce

Heggie, who lives about a half-hour away in Florida, over to his house to show Heggie some workouts.

"I had him come down where I lived and just worked on some things this summer," Williams said. "He just came down, I showed him some things to work on, and he just really worked on them by himself."

Williams added that he modeled his leadership after the advice he got from seniors during his freshman year.

"I mean when I was a freshman, I had Trevor Laws, Justin Brown and [Pat] Kuntz who were the older guys," he said. "They showed me how to play."

The new-found leadership role became official against Michigan State on Sept. 18, when Williams was named a

game-day captain, along with junior tight end Kyle Rudolph. Williams said he was caught a bit off guard when Kelly called his name out at the Friday team meeting, but knew that someone back home would be very happy.

"I was very surprised and I was very thankful," he said. "My mom's been asking for four years, 'Ian when are you going to be a captain?' 'Ian when are you going to be a captain?' So I talked to her on Saturday and said, 'Mom, I'm a captain,' so she was really proud of me."

'Clog the middle'

Against the Spartans, Kelly singled out Williams for his outstanding play.

"Yeah, he's a man," Kelly said. "I mean, he was dominant for us. He controlled the line of scrimmage from his position. Now, he's got to have help at certain areas, but he was clearly a dominating player for us on the defensive side of the

"I'm the old guy in the group now. So I just feel like I have to be a role model for the younger guys."

Ian Williams
senior defensive tackle



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Senior defensive tackle Ian Williams brings down Purdue's Robert Marve during Notre Dame's season-opening win.

ball."

While Kelly may have been pleased, Williams said he still has plenty to improve.

"I personally think I didn't play that good, so I've still got a lot of work to do," Williams said. "I really appreciate him calling me out and giving me a little push, but I just feel personally that I still have a lot of things to work on."

While the generic job description of a nose guard in a 3-4 defense is to "clog the middle," Williams said it was more specific than that.

"[My job is to] make sure the ball bounces outside," he said. "Make sure the ball doesn't come in any of my gaps."

Once it gets out there, Williams relies on junior defensive ends Kapron Lewis-Moore and Ethan Johnson to make plays. He called Lewis-Moore and Johnson "two of [his] best friends."

"It helps with chemistry, talking on the field," Williams said. "We can joke around about little things, keep everything level on the field."

Despite Williams' difficult job description, he didn't miss a game for more than three seasons, until suffering a season-ending MCL sprain against Navy on Oct. 23.

Due to that injury, only linebacker Kerry Neal played in every game of the last four years.

"Me and Kerry, we've worked hard since we got here as freshmen," Williams said. "We made a pact before we got here that we would just try and make plays in every game that we play in."

One aspect of the game that is not part of Williams' job

description is pass defense, but in two of Notre Dame's last five wins — this year against Purdue and last year against Washington State — Williams has recorded interceptions.

"It's crazy because D-linemen never get interceptions so it's exciting I got two," he said.

Against Purdue, Williams caught the ball after senior cornerback Gary Gray tipped it to him.

Williams said he owes Gray a night out to dinner for helping him get the pick.

Williams is currently tied for the team lead with one interception, and has his sights set on more.

"I'm trying to go for more," Williams said jokingly. "I'm trying to lead the team."

Notre Dame's defense currently ranks 79th in the country in run defense, but throughout the season Kelly said he's seen improvement in the defense.

"Being a defensive player, you don't want the opposing offense to get any points, gain any yards or anything like that," Williams said. "So, I mean, that's a negative right there. But I can see a difference in us from last year."

Elston said that while Williams' strong play didn't surprise him, he foresaw even more improvement during his senior year.

"I expected him to play the way he is playing right now, so it is not really a shock," Elston said before the Stanford game. "He is not yet, but he can be a dominant, dominant nose guard."



TOM LA/The Observer

Williams played in every game during his first three seasons with the Irish before injuring his MCL during Notre Dame's 35-17 loss to Navy on Oct. 23.

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BARRY GALLUP, JR.

Gallup relishes both returning a kick and playing the piano

By LAURA MYERS
Sports Writer

A concert pianist sits alone on stage, showcasing his skills for an attentive audience.

Fifth-year Barry Gallup, Jr. played piano from kindergarten to high school. At Notre Dame, he turned to a different medium: returning kicks.

"All eyes are on you in the Stadium. You're pretty much alone back there when they kick the ball to you," Gallup said. "It's something I felt real comfortable doing."

After missing the last four games of his junior season with an ankle injury, Gallup returned to the field in 2009 against Michigan. He returned two kicks for 77 yards, including a third-quarter return for 52 yards.

"It was the culmination of all my hard work getting back and all the people that supported me, and my family and all my friends staying positive," he said. "I didn't know if I was ever going to play again, because I had a pretty bad ankle injury."

"That was a job I didn't want to give up."

In nine returns in 2009, Gallup totaled 163 yards. He competed for the job again this season, but fell on the depth chart.

"All the guys give me a hard time, they say the fifth-years are old, so maybe I'm a step slow from what I used to be," he said.

However, he has still played a significant role on special teams this year, and has made three tackles on the season, including one for loss.

"A lot of people said I proba-

bly hadn't made a tackle since high school, but I don't think I even made too many tackles in high school," said Gallup, who is listed at 5-foot-11 and 190 pounds.

After the 2009 season, Gallup did not know whether he would come back for a fifth year. When the coaches offered, Gallup answered quickly.

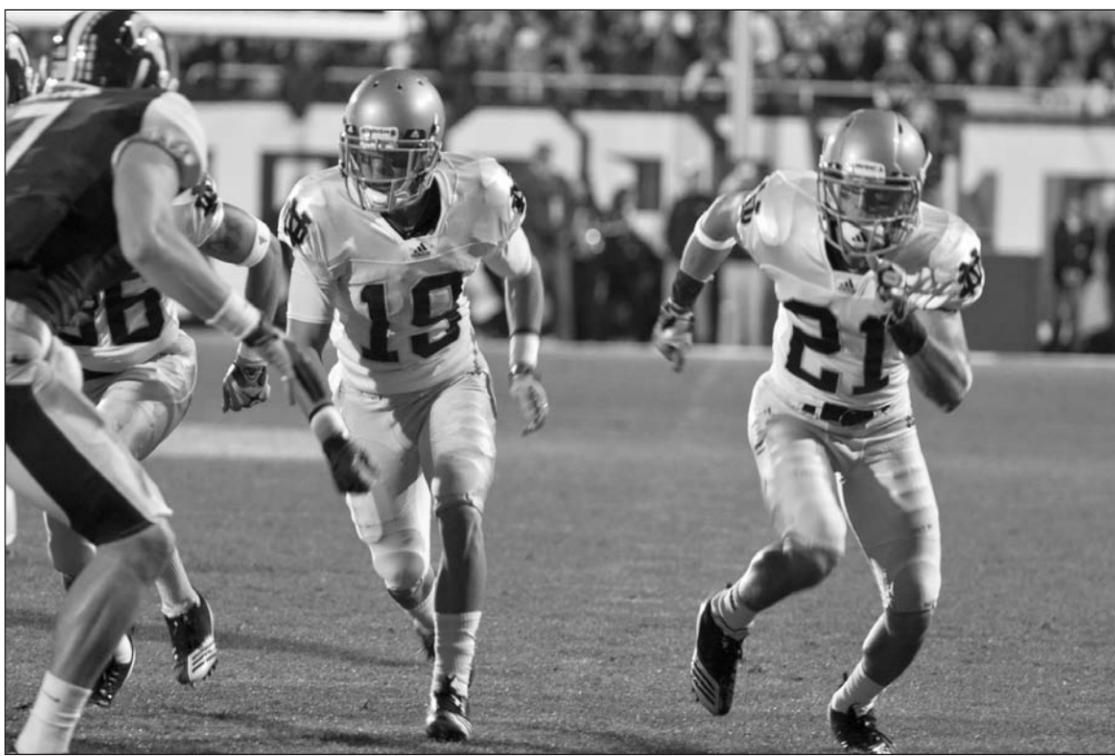
"It wasn't really a decision for me. It wasn't a predicament," he said. "The opportunity to play at Notre Dame one more time, I didn't have any indecision on my part. Just to be around the guys and to have the opportunity to run out of the tunnel, and to play another season was something I was looking for."

Because he didn't know his situation, last season's Senior Day loss to Connecticut could have been Gallup's last game. However, he said the seniors are determined to make this year different.

"I think the main difference this year is we want to finish with a win," he said. "It's not the same feeling when you lose and your family's on the field after the game and you give them a fake smile. It's just not the same."

The fifth year gave Gallup a chance to explore his interests outside of football, as well. He graduated with a degree in finance after just three years, and has spent the last two years taking graduate-level classes in other subjects that interest him — including piano.

"I don't think many of my teammates know that about me," he said. "You don't see a lot of football players and pianists walking around. ... I



Senior receiver Barry Gallup, Jr., has always enjoyed the spotlight, whenever it may find him. After playing the piano through high school, he has gotten his adrenaline-high from returning kickoffs.

kind of got away from it with football and my finance classes, but I've been able to get back into it."

However, he might not have time much longer. Gallup accepted a job with CitiGroup, an investment banking firm in New York City, in October.

The job came after many applications and interviews, Gallup said. His academic record probably helped him out, too; he was recently named to ESPN's academic all-district thanks to his studies in graduate classes.

"That's something my mom was proud of," he said. "She was happy to hear that. I've got to keep my mom happy. She's the best."

In fact, part of the deal for Gallup to attend Notre Dame, which is far from his home in Wellesley, Mass., was that his mom would attend every one of his games.

"I'm really close with my family. My mom, my dad, my sister. They're all my best friends," Gallup said. "My mom's actually never missed one of my games, all five years. She comes to

every game. ... I'm forever grateful to her for everything she's done for me. And my dad, he's my biggest supporter. And my sister, she's my best friend."

After five tumultuous years at Notre Dame, Gallup said he is ready to face the real world.

"It's been crazy all the stuff that's happened," he said. "I think my experiences here have prepared me for life after football and everything I'll have to go through."

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BOBBY BURGER

Burger leaves starting spot at Dayton for ND

By CHRIS MASOUD
Sports Writer

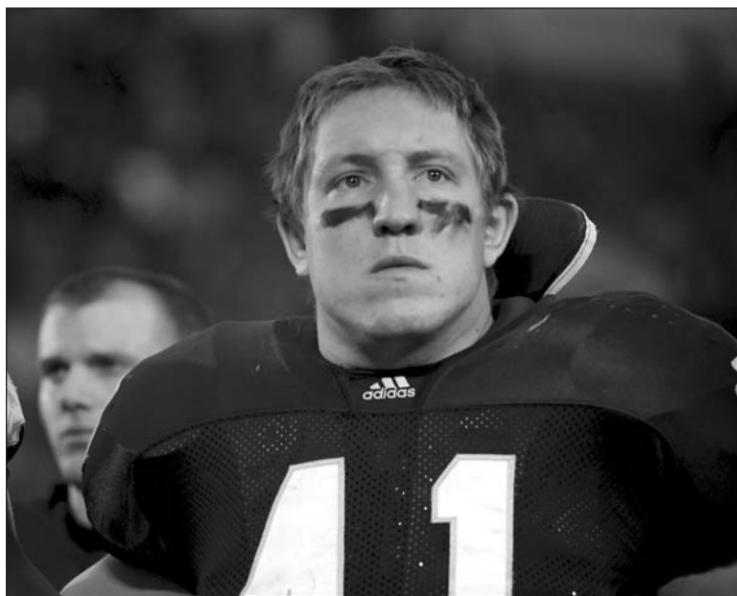
Dayton scout team defensive player of the year as a redshirt freshman in 2006, a team-high eight sacks the following year, and a Division I FCS Mid Major National Football Championship in 2007 — that would be at the top of senior Bobby Burger's college football resume.

So why drop a starting spot at a respected collegiate program and transfer to Notre Dame?

"It's been a lifelong dream ever since I was a little kid," Burger said. "When I was at Dayton, I gave everything I had to the Dayton Flyers. But my grades were finally good enough, and academically I transferred and was accepted. It's been a dream come true."

Burger's dream developed at a young age, when he came to South Bend to watch football games with his father Bob Burger, an offensive guard for the Irish from 1977-80. While his father played on the national championship team of 1977, Burger has never been pressured to follow in his footsteps.

"He really doesn't say anything," Burger said. "He's been so supportive of me throughout the whole entire walk-on process, earning a scholarship, playing — he's just been very supportive."



Senior tight end Bobby Burger began his career at Dayton before transferring to Notre Dame once his grades were high enough.

Burger's transfer from Dayton stemmed from putting in the work in the classroom. But once accepted at Notre Dame, Burger knew he could earn a spot on the team as a walk-on. After a demanding workout process, Burger and his fellow walk-ons forged a relationship known as the WOPU — the Walk-On Players Union.

"We joined the team, and we had three days a week, while we're having practice, of 5:30

a.m. workouts. Just a half-hour, nonstop, no-water, throw up a couple times, that's okay workouts. At practice, instead of practicing, we did conditioning drills because we weren't ready to play yet."

After emerging as a member of the team, Burger focused his attentions on showcasing his skills that brought a national title to Dayton — on the other side of the ball. The coaching staff converted Burger from a defensive

end into a fullback and a tight end. Burger excelled in his new position on the scout team, earning a scholarship before the start of the regular season.

"I'm proud of that fact, the whole year — earning your respect as a football player, and I think I did that through scout team. I won scout team player of the week several times, and it was just a matter of getting my respect that first year."

While Burger's role changed from starter to scout team player, the senior has embraced his role as working to improve the starters on the defense while ensuring that the practice offense mimics the style of each week's opposition.

"To see the [opposing] offense run the same plays you ran during the week and seeing the defense stop them — that's definitely satisfying knowing that you helped the defense by doing your part," he said.

In addition to his scout team role, Burger made 183 appearances on special teams for the Irish in 2009, including his first play in Notre Dame Stadium. Burger started on kickoff return for the first game of the 2009 season against Nevada.

"I'm thinking to myself, 'Okay, this is the first time I ever ran out of the tunnel, first time I ever put pads on, game jersey on. Just let this one be kickoff so I can kind of

get the flow of the game down."

But after winning the toss, Nevada deferred the return.

"I get down in my stance, and it's kickoff return," Burger said. "All of a sudden, I'll never forget, I started smiling and I told myself, 'Let's just do this. This is awesome. This is cool. This is what you worked so hard for.'"

Burger's biggest play for the Irish came later in the season in a 24-21 victory against Purdue on Sept. 26. Burger caught a pass and broke a tackle for a nine-yard gain, good enough for an Irish first down on a critical third-and-long situation in the third quarter.

While the senior has relished his moments as a member of the football program, he said he has been especially grateful for his experiences with professors and friends off the field. For Burger, just attending Notre Dame is a dream fulfilled.

"While Dayton was just a wonderful experience, there's only one Notre Dame," Burger said. "When you're young, running around South Quad throwing a football, looking up at the Stadium and seeing all those guys run out there. Sometimes if you put your mind to a goal, even your wildest dreams can come true if you really work hard at it."

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ROBERT HUGHES

Moments of glory break through years of strife

By SAM WERNER
Sports Writer

Before Notre Dame Stadium public address announcer Mike Collins even announces the play, everyone in the building knows who just got the carry. No, the student section isn't booing. They're screaming "Huuuuuughes!"

Senior running back Robert Hughes has become familiar with that sound from the northwest corner of the Stadium.

"[The cheer] means a lot," Hughes said. "When I hear it, it just kind of gives me that extra motivation to say, 'Hey, the fans are loving this, so keep doing it and keep going.' So when I hear it, it just makes me want to run harder and give that much more."

Perhaps the one play that exemplifies Hughes' extra effort came last season against Washington.

With 1:20 left on the clock, the Irish scored a touchdown to go ahead 28-27. Hughes plowed up the middle on the two-point conversion attempt and was stuffed at the line of scrimmage. But then, the pile just started moving slowly towards the goal line. The mass of players crept in the direction of the goal line until the ball crossed the plane to give Notre Dame a key 30-27 lead.

"I wanted to make sure that my brothers had a good time partying in the end zone, so once I got stopped initially I was just like, 'Don't give in. You're a fighter, so fight,'" Hughes said. "Guys jumped on the pile, jumped on the pile. A couple of my guys came up

and pushed the pile and we were just fighting our way for that goal."

Coming to Notre Dame out of Chicago's Hubbard High School in the fall of 2007, Hughes made an immediate push for playing time. He made special teams appearances in the first three games of his Irish career, and received his first carries in the fourth. Against Michigan State, he ran the ball six times, mostly in short-yardage situations, for 33 yards and scored his first touchdown.

Just over a month later, though, tragedy struck. On Oct. 30, 2007, Hughes' brother was shot and killed in Chicago. Despite the tremendous emotional turmoil, Hughes said the tight connections he forged at Notre Dame were invaluable throughout the grieving process.

"The whole Notre Dame community was excellent in a hard time — my teammates especially," he said. "When hard times come, you know, a lot of things go through people's heads, especially after the tragic loss of my brother. A lot of things were going on, but my teammates were there to pick me up and give me a little bit of encouragement and peace of mind."

In that weekend's game against Navy, the Irish drove the ball down to the Midshipmen's 3-yard line on their opening drive. Hughes came in and powered the ball into the end zone to put the Irish on the board. After the game, then-Irish coach Charlie Weis said Hughes was "going to get [the ball] every play

until he got it in the end zone."



Senior running back Robert Hughes became a fan favorite during his four years at Notre Dame, largely due to his ability to break tackles on play after play.

until he got it in the end zone."

"He gave me the opportunity, and like any other chance, I wanted to score touchdowns and help the team win. I got the ball and was able to get in there," Hughes said. "I didn't play the rest of the game because I was a little too emotional on the sideline, but it definitely felt great. That definitely would tie as one of my greatest moments [at Notre Dame]."

Later in the season, Hughes would see the field even more, and make some history in the process. In the final two games of the 2007 campaign against Duke and Stanford, he carried the ball 35 times for 246 yards and two touchdowns, becoming the first Irish freshman to rush for 100 yards in back-to-back games since Allen Pinkett in 1982.

In his sophomore season, Hughes more than doubled his rushing attempts from his freshman campaign. He was most in his element in Notre

Dame's rain-soaked win over Michigan in the second game of the season, with his punishing downhill style translating into 19 carries, 79 yards and two touchdowns. Hughes, though, hesitates to pinpoint one moment or game as his favorite of the past four years.

"It's just been a great four years," he said. "In the course of one year, so many things happen — so many great things happen. To sit here and say there's one special great moment would just not really shed light on all the time that I had here."

A year later, Hughes saw his role on the team change slightly. When then-senior James Aldridge went down with an injury, Hughes was forced into duty at the fullback position.

"It just adds versatility to your résumé," he said of the position switch. "It's just like any other profession, going and getting experience in different things. Whatever I can do to help the team win, I'll definitely try my hardest at it and do it because I love the guys on this team."

When he did get the ball during the junior season, though, Hughes made the most of it. Even though his total carries decreased from 112 to 88, his rushing yards rose from 382 to 416 to go along with five touchdowns. In his first start of the season against Washington State, the junior had a career-high 24 carries for 131 yards and a score.

So far this season, Hughes has been used primarily as a blocking back in Irish coach Brian Kelly's spread offense, but showed his effectiveness three weeks ago against Western Michigan, when he rushed the ball eight times for 63 yards. Hughes said he has also assumed a lead-by-example role in the Irish backfield this season.

"The leadership role that I play isn't really using words or being a rah-rah guy," he said. "It's really just continuing to fight. I think knowing what I've been through and having other guys look at me and see I'm still fighting, still standing strong, hopefully that inspires a lot of guys to keep doing this."

Hughes said the most memorable part of his Notre Dame experience has been the strong bonds formed in the Irish locker room, through both wins and losses.

"It's much different than just having regular friends because you're going through the same things, you're going through the same struggles," he said. "It's good to look over at the guy next to you and know that he's bearing the same problem's you're bearing. You're patting him on the back and he'll pat you on the back."

He did note, however, that the reasons he came to Notre Dame in the first place encompassed more than the football program. Though he considered numerous Big Ten schools during the recruiting process, he said the decision was "hands-down" Notre Dame.

"I could've gone to any other school and got through just fine, but I wanted to come here and challenge myself academically," he said. "I knew it was going to be difficult so I pretty much took a leap of faith, and I knew at the end of the day I'd be better for it."

Has that challenge paid off? "I'm much wiser, much smarter than when I came in here," Hughes said with a smile.

As for this week's game against Utah, Hughes said the enormity of Senior Day hadn't even hit him yet.

"It's amazing how it came up so fast," he said. "It sort of crept up on me. Feels like yesterday I was running out of the tunnel for the first time."

Whether or not he realizes it, Hughes' senior year is winding down, but at the end of the long practices and after disappointing losses, though, there's always one thing Hughes said he could count on when he goes home — his 1 1/2-year-old Dogo Argentino, Raycu, will be there to greet him.

"He doesn't care whether the day's bad or good," Hughes said. "He's happy to see me and I come home happy to see him."

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PAT COVENEY/The Observer

Hughes, pictured running a play fake in April's Blue-Gold Game, has accounted for 13 touchdowns and more than 1,100 rushing yards in his career.

BRANDON WALKER

One of Walker's first kicks counts as his favorite

By MICHAEL TODISCO
Sports Writer

Many athletes chose Notre Dame at the end of their recruiting process because of the University's unique blend of athletic tradition and academic excellence. For senior kicker Brandon Walker, it was fate.

While kicking for his Midget football team in fifth grade, Walker's talents were identified by his hometown Findlay, Ohio, high school football coach. The coach called Walker over and told him that if he kept kicking, one day he could end up playing for Notre Dame.

The young Walker shrugged off the coach's prediction as a long shot. During his senior season at Findlay High School, it seemed that Walker's skepticism was well founded. He had committed to play for Louisville under coach Bobby Petrino.

When Petrino fled Louisville for a job in the NFL, Walker's decision-making process was reopened. Notre Dame was the first school to call. Thinking back to the words of his high school football coach, Walker knew that it was meant to be.

"When Notre Dame made me an offer, I took it as a sign that I needed to come here," Walker said. "When I took my visit, the school was everything that I thought it would be and more. It just worked out perfectly."

Walker's time at Notre Dame was immediately met with immense pressure and mammoth expectations. As one of the nation's top kicking prospects, Walker was part of the illustrious recruiting class that included quarterback Jimmy Clausen and receiver Golden Tate. The group

of talented freshmen was expected to lead Notre Dame back to national prominence.

Walker earned the starting kicker role his freshman year, a season in which the Irish went 3-9. Walker said that his tumultuous freshman season was a difficult adjustment from high school.

"It was tough to be thrown in there as a freshman and start losing because all of us who had been recruited came from winning programs," he said.

Although the season was a disappointing one for the Irish, Walker's favorite memory from his time as a Notre Dame player came during that 2007 season.

In the game at UCLA, Walker kicked a crucial 48-yard field goal in the third quarter to lead the Irish to victory. Walker said he would always remember his big game at the Rose Bowl.

"The game at UCLA was definitely my defining moment on the field," Walker said.

Walker said he remembers his strong performance that day with a special souvenir he acquired on the trip to Los Angeles.

"Coach Weis gave me the game ball that day, and it says 'Rose Bowl' right on it," Walker said with a blend of reminiscence and pride. "I gave that to my parents as a Christmas gift to thank them for everything that they've done for me."

Despite a slow start to his sophomore campaign, Walker finished the season strong, connecting on 13 of his last 17 attempts, including six field goals from beyond 40 yards. He even led the team in scoring despite missing the Boston College game.

Walker's bright career took a back seat to his health in his junior year, when he suffered a seri-

ous back injury. The injury was a particularly difficult time for Walker, as he could not kick at all for the entire year. While Walker contemplated ending his football career, the unity from his teammates drove him to return to the squad.

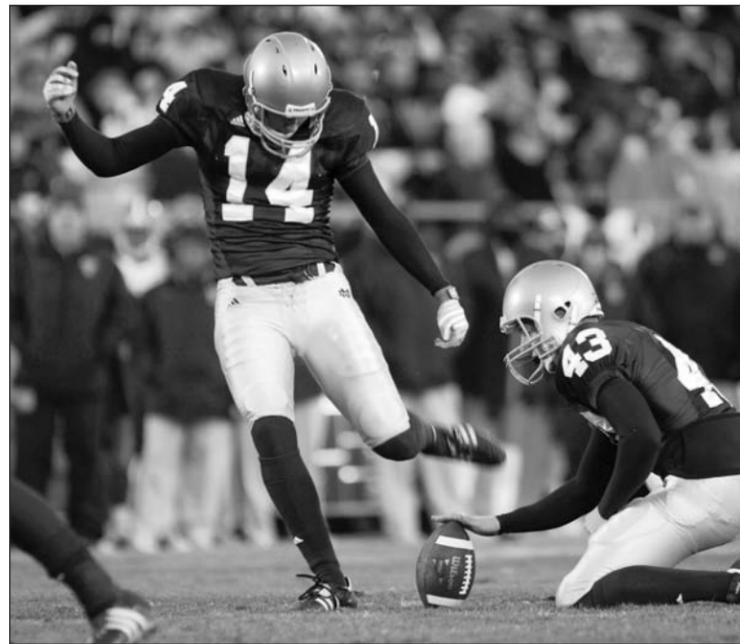
"There was a time when I thought I would have to hang it up for good because of the injury," Walker said. "It just wasn't allowing me to do what I do best or perform at the level that I needed to, but no matter what the guys and coaches were always there for me. My desire to just be part of the team again is what motivated me to get back in shape."

Walker's greatest challenge at Notre Dame came not from his opponents, but rather from some of the fervent Irish fans. As a highly touted recruit, Walker certainly had high expectations from the Irish faithful. After struggles in his freshman and sophomore year and his injury junior year, some of the criticism from the fans became hard for Walker to handle.

"I know that the fans are really passionate, but it was really hard to hear some of their criticism," Walker said. "We have really great fans, but at the same time I have heard plenty of really tough comments."

After returning from injury, Walker faced stiff competition to regain his job. Nate Tausch and David Ruffer had two of the most successful seasons for kickers in Notre Dame history. After it became evident that he would not win the starting job for his junior or senior season, Walker began mentoring and teaching the young kickers.

"Many times they would come to me and ask for advice or ask-



Observer File Photo

Senior kicker Brandon Walker converted 20 field goals during his two years as Notre Dame's starting placekicker.

ing me to watch their form if something wasn't feeling right," Walker said. "Definitely being here to help them was important not only for the football aspect but also with life. With Tausch coming in as a freshman, he had a few issues where he wanted to talk with me and I would always be available for him."

Looking to the future, Walker predicted success for his own career and the Notre Dame football program.

"I was happy when Mendoza became the No. 1 business school just in time for me to graduate with my finance degree," Walker said. "I am looking into the whole job process and I have a really good lead out in California."

As for the Irish, Walker believes that coach Brian Kelly is

the man for the job.

"Coach Kelly and his staff are perfect for this institution. What you guys see on the field may not be exactly what you want to see at the moment but everyone here is behind him and the changes are for the best."

In a final assessment of his time at Notre Dame, one filled with highs and lows, praise and criticism, Walker said that he had not a single regret.

"Even though my career didn't work out how I imagined, it is absolutely fate that I should be here all the way from Midget football, and I would not change a thing or one moment of my career."

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DERRY HERLIHY

Former rugby player grasps chance as a walk-on

By SAM WERNER
Sports Writer

New jersey number, new skill set, new persona — just another week for senior Derry Herlihy.

As a member of Notre Dame's scout team, it's Herlihy's job to mimic opposing players that the first team defense needs to prepare for.

"They'll give us a jersey number of someone on the other team, and we're that person for a week," he said. "I've played H-back, running back, wide receiver. But it's a lot of fun because you're doing something a little different every week."

That ability to play multiple positions gives Herlihy a unique role.

"I'm kind of a hybrid, like an X-factor," he joked.

Herlihy made his first attempt at walking on to the team his freshman year, but didn't survive the final cut. Instead of giving up, the Houston native returned a year later to fulfill his goal.

During the interim, Herlihy took his talents to the rugby pitch, joining Notre Dame's club rugby team in its first season returning to Division I.

"Rugby is a man's game," Herlihy said. "You have to be a

[grown] man to play rugby.

"It definitely toughened me up a little bit. Hitting someone with pads on is a piece of cake after you do it without any pads."

Herlihy returned to football full-time in 2009, and said that the main feeling when he made the team was "relief." After two rounds of tryouts, the 10 or so remaining walk-ons had to survive five weeks of 5:30 a.m. "workouts from hell," according to Herlihy.

"I was really excited when I made the first cut in tryouts," he said. "Then after that it was a constant worry of how did I do today? Who was watching me? Am I going to get cut? It was relief [when I made the team], because by that time all my friends thought I was on the team, so I didn't want to have to tell everybody, 'Oh, I got cut.'"

It's those friends, though, that helped define Herlihy's four years at Notre Dame. He said the connections he made during his first year in St. Edward's Hall have held strong up to this day.

"Most of my friends are guys that I lived with freshman year, guys that I lived down the hall from freshman year," Herlihy said. "You always feel like you're a part of something greater than yourself."

Another Notre Dame subculture of which Herlihy is a proud member is the Walk-On Players Union, more commonly known as WOPU Nation. An unofficial club formed by the walk-on members of the team, Herlihy called WOPU "one of the coolest things [he's] been a part of at Notre Dame." He said the walk-ons hang out together outside of practice and keep in touch through a "pretty hilarious" e-mail thread.

While WOPU was created in good fun, Herlihy said that it has forged an important bond between the non-scholarship players.

"When [a member of WOPU Nation gets] on the field, every single guy rallies around those guys because they're representing us," Herlihy said. "They represent all the hard work we do; we go through everything together. When those guys get on the field and get a chance to make an impact for Notre Dame football, it means something to every single guy in WOPU."

Herlihy has only seen action in the Blue-Gold Game, but that alone, he said, was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"I think I got three carries for about one yard in the spring game," he said. "But ... just lining up on the field wearing the Notre Dame uniform playing in



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Senior Derry Herlihy has played many roles for Notre Dame as a versatile scout team player.

Notre Dame Stadium is a special thing — something that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life."

Upon graduation in May, Herlihy — an economics and political science double major — said he will begin working in sales and trading for Deutsche Bank in New York. For now, though, he said he's just trying to enjoy his time as a Notre

Dame football player.

"There's a million people that would give a ton to be in our place, putting on the gold helmet and representing Notre Dame," Herlihy said. "So if you have the chance to do that, you've got to take advantage of it."

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DAVID RUFFER

Walk-on, now a starter, shatters Irish records

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Editor

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the Oct. 15 edition of The Observer.

When David Ruffer walked off the practice fields Tuesday afternoon, two loyal autograph seekers quickly approached him and asked for his signature. Unsurprisingly, the senior walk-on kicker signed away — something he never thought he would be in a position to do.

"It's cool I guess," Ruffer said a few seconds after putting the cap back on the provided Sharpie. "I never really thought of myself as somebody one day who would be signing autographs, but I'll take what I can get. It's neat to be in that position."

Then again, Ruffer never really thought of himself as somebody who would be Notre Dame's starting place kicker, having never missed a competitive field goal, even splitting the uprights from 50 yards away. In fact, the only aspect of Ruffer's current life he could have anticipated is the one aspect that initially had been denied him — being a student at Notre Dame.

Denial serves its purpose

Ruffer's father and grandfather graduated from Notre Dame, as did a few of his uncles and his older sister, but when Ruffer received a response to his application, it was not the response anybody in the family had hoped for.

"I grew up loving Notre Dame. I just wanted to be a student first of all," Ruffer said. "I didn't get in as a freshman, and that was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. It made me realize you have to work really hard for the things you want."

Ruffer then turned his eyes to William & Mary for a year, where, after four years of playing varsity golf in high school, he took up kicking field goals.

After a tryout, Ruffer walked on to the Tribe football team.

"I walked on there kicking," he said. "and it's worked out ever since."

A field goal and a tryout

Once he transferred to Notre Dame, Ruffer joined the Siegfried interhall football team, and after two games, in which he kicked one field goal and a couple of extra points, attempted to walk on with the Irish.

"It was more of when I would go out and practice [that I impressed people]," Ruffer said.

The tryout process was threefold — one night with only tees and the then-special teams coach Brian Polian, one night with a snapper and holder and Polian, and a final night in front of then-Irish coach Charlie Weis.

"I was really nervous. These guys were going to see me for about 15 or 20 minutes, and if I don't do really well, they will probably not want to see me again," he said. "I just hoped I would perform to the best of my ability. I would have obviously been upset with myself if I came out here and didn't do the best that I know I could have."

Impress them he surely did, as Ruffer does not remember missing a single kick in the three tryout sessions.

The rest is history

Ruffer only took one kick in a game in 2008, a point-after attempt that clanked off the upright. In 2009, Ruffer took over place kicking duties after incumbent Nick Tausch injured his foot, and Ruffer connected on nine of his 10 point-after attempts, and all five field goal attempts.

After nine games this season, he has made all 13 of his field goal attempts, bringing his Notre Dame career total to 19-of-19. Including his one field goal as a Rambler, Ruffer has never missed a field goal attempt in competition.

By making kick after kick, Ruffer has raised the Notre Dame standard for place kickers. His 18 consecutive made field goals bested Tausch's school record of 14, as well as the previous record for most consecutive made field goals to open a career, which was previously 13.

"I try not to think about [the streak]," he said. "Right now I'm zero-for-zero with Western Michigan coming up, and that is how I approach every game."

Ruffer's 50-yard kick against Pittsburgh tied the sixth-longest field goal in Notre Dame history. The longest in school history was kicked in 1976 by Dave Reeve, a 53-yarder. Reeve should not count his record safe as long as Ruffer is kicking, according to special teams coach Mike Elston.

"I see the kid kick 52 or 53 yards every day," Elston said. "We were well in front of his threshold [on the 50-yard field goal] which is really about the 35-yard line."

'Kickers are head-cases'

After the Pittsburgh game, in which Ruffer also connected on 32- and 31-yard field goals, he attributed much of his success to junior holder Ryan Kavanagh, also a walk-on.

"Ryan Kavanagh is one of my best friends and he will say something to keep me calm," Ruffer said. "But then from when the ball is snapped to when I kick it I don't know what happens."

Tuesday Kavanagh said he knows he needs to keep a close eye on Ruffer, if for no other reason than the position he plays.

"Kickers are head-cases," Kavanagh said. "You have to make sure they're honed in on the ball."

"I just give him a couple reminders, take it easy, make sure he takes a deep breath ... I just make sure he's just focused on the kick."

Elston said he has seen the



GRACE KENESEY/The Observer

Senior kicker David Ruffer has never missed a field goal for Notre Dame, standing at 18-for-18 over the past two seasons.

"head-case" in kickers that Kavanagh refers to, but in Ruffer it is more of an even demeanor that Elston sees.

"The kickers that I've been around that are good athletes, that have a good demeanor, that aren't just specialists as kickers and have done other things in their athletic career, they typically tend to be more competitive and more even-keeled when they take the field in pressure situations," Elston said. "Because they are used to being in it."

Whatever reasoning Kavanagh and Elston have for his success this season, Ruffer thinks he has found a groove simply because he has relaxed, in all areas of his life.

"I still work really hard [in school], but before I was really a perfectionist. Now I have grown up to a point where I realize things won't always go your way," Ruffer said. "That little bit of a laid-back attitude has helped my focus a little bit."

At some point, things on the football field won't necessarily go Ruffer's way. He may miss a field goal — believe it or not, he does miss them in practice. When the Saturday afternoon comes that one goes awry, Ruffer said he is ready to deal with that setback.

"You can only learn from mistakes," he said. "You can't make every single one, so it will happen eventually. The trick will be how I bounce back from that. It will happen, but I feel like I have a pretty strong head, so I'll be okay."

'Not For Long'

If Ruffer keeps making each and every one of his field goals, questions concerning the NFL are bound to come his way.

Ruffer quickly dismisses those thoughts.

"I don't plan on playing football forever," he said. "It's probably going to end after this season and I'll need to get started on the next chapter of my life."

"NFL stands for Not For Long, right? I would give it a shot, but if there is something else that gives me more of a sense of fulfillment, I'll do that instead."

Amid all of his success on the field, the primary reason Ruffer is at Notre Dame hasn't changed — the same reason he wanted to come to the University in the first place.

"It's been difficult, but I still think of myself as a student first," he said. "That's why I'm going through the interview process right now, and just trying to get that Notre Dame degree."

Ruffer, an Economics major, interned in the accounting department of Gurley Leep over the summer, and has not decided what he will do after graduation, nor has he ruled much out.

"I could go and be a house husband," he said. "If my wife is the bread winner, maybe I'll just take care of the kids."

He may not know what the future holds, but Ruffer did not expect any of what the present holds either, as he continues to move past his wildest dreams, field goal after field goal.

"I never thought this was going to happen. Obviously I thought it'd be something cool, but never to this magnitude. I can't say it's a dream come true, because I never really dreamed of this much."

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YUE WU/The Observer

Ruffer began his college career as a walk-on at William & Mary before transferring to Notre Dame. After one season playing interhall football for Siegfried, he joined the Irish.

RYAN SHEEHAN

Two-sport star leaves track behind to walk on

By ANDREW OWENS
Sports Writer

For many high school students, picking a college is a simple decision — just choose the one that has the best balance of academic and athletic prestige. For senior cornerback Ryan Sheehan, the decision was a little more complicated.

An eight-time varsity-letter winner at Loudon Valley High School in Purcellville, Va., Sheehan starred in both track and football. In track, he won conference and state titles while setting school records.

In football, his list of accomplishments was no less stellar, earning all-district honors and ranking at the top of his team in both rushing yards and tackles. His senior year, Sheehan was named Loudon Valley's Most Outstanding Male Athlete.

Sheehan faced the decision of fulfilling his dream of becoming a college football player at a small school, or coming to Notre Dame under scholarship as a track athlete. Unlike his four brothers who made the decision to play college football, Sheehan decided to go in a different direction and accept Notre Dame's scholarship offer.

But during his freshman year, Sheehan partially tore his Achilles tendon, ending his season and leaving him out of action for eight months. The lengthy healing process gave Sheehan a chance to evaluate his priorities, during which he made the decision to drop track and follow his true passion — football.

"When I made that decision, I was unsure of how my family would react to me quitting track," Sheehan said. "It turned out that I had my family's full support."

As Sheehan learned, it would be no small task to switch sports. During his sophomore year, tryouts were held at 4:30 a.m. for the entire semester. During such a difficult time, Sheehan reflected that it would have been easy to simply give up, but that he always had the support of his family.

"My parents and my brothers helped me get through it," Sheehan said. "They come to the games even though I have not gotten much playing time. They make the drive from Virginia every weekend to see me on the sidelines."

Despite making the squad, the nature of being a student-athlete prevented life from getting any easier. He now

"I was the first from my family to come here, and I rave about this place all the time when I go home. I have no doubt that I am a better person now than when I first started here."

Ryan Sheehan
senior cornerback



COLEMAN COLLINS/The Observer

Senior cornerback Ryan Sheehan, on right, originally came to Notre Dame planning to focus on his track career, but in due time, he placed his walk-on status with the football team above all else.

had to juggle the life of a varsity athlete with the academic workload of a Notre Dame student — without a full scholarship this time. Nevertheless, Sheehan believes that having such a busy schedule ending up helping, not hindering, his academic life.

"I've actually gotten better grades since joining the football team even though I have had more difficult classes as I have gotten older," Sheehan said. "I had to put in the time to make sure I did well. I had no choice but to work hard or fail."

Sheehan added that a typical day in his life includes classes, practice, and then heading straight to the library to do homework.

All of the experiences Sheehan has encountered during his time at Notre Dame have prepared him to excel once he graduates in the spring. As an accounting major, he plans on pursuing a master's degree, but is still unsure of where that will be. This summer, he will be working in the field of public accounting in Washington, D.C.

Despite the struggles, set-

backs and hardships he has faced, Sheehan looks back on his time at Notre Dame with a positive attitude.

"I'm very happy with my experience," he said. "Coming here and meeting all the people, especially the other walk-ons, has exposed me to something unique. I was the first from my family to come here, and I rave about this place all the time when I go home. I have no doubt that I am a better person now than when I first started here."

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JAMES REDSHAW

4.0 GPA not all that defines cornerback's Notre Dame career

By ANDREW GASTELUM
Sports Writer

The priorities of the student come before the priorities of the athlete, and according to senior cornerback James "J.T." Redshaw, that's the way it should be.

Redshaw graduated as his high school's valedictorian

while captaining the football and baseball teams at Norwin High School in Pittsburgh, Pa.

"Academics and sports have always been a big part of my life, since I was little," Redshaw said. "My parents always taught me that grades come first, but I never really got good grades for anybody else but myself, because that was what I wanted to do."

Even with a schedule filled with medical school interviews, keeping up with friends, and football practice in the afternoon, Redshaw's pre-med major still makes academics his No. 1 priority. The senior has maintained a 4.0 GPA while transferring his drive and dedication to the football field.

"Coming out [to practice] against this caliber of athletes always keeps you driven and motivated to do whatever you can to help the team for the upcoming Saturday," Redshaw said. "I love waking up every day and coming here to be a part of this team, knowing that I contribute to something great."

Without his football pads, the 5-foot-9 cornerback is hardly recognized on campus, often having to prove his position on the roster.

But Redshaw finds inspiration in former walk-on, and 2009 graduate, Mike Anello, who became a special teams expert and fan-favorite despite his small stature.

"Seeing everything that [Anello] went through being

undersized makes you realize how important the intangibles are in football because you can't teach that," Redshaw said. "It serves as inspiration that shows you how important every rep is in practice and where it can get you."

While Redshaw draws inspiration in those around him on the football field, he finds motivation in his family, trying to return their sacrifices with his success.

"I see all of my family's hard work to get me to a place like ND, so it's the least I can do to just give my best effort when I am given this wonderful opportunity," Redshaw said.

James Redshaw
senior cornerback

"You wouldn't want to tell anybody about the tryouts because at any moment you could get cut."

Football and family seem to mesh well in the Redshaw family, especially living in a football town in western Pennsylvania.

"Growing up in Pittsburgh, football is a way of life," the senior said. "My dad was one of those dads that make sure they show up for every practice and game, and for him to see me play for Notre Dame is something special."

When breaking the news that

he made the team to his family during spring of his freshman year, Redshaw waited until Easter break, a week before the annual Blue-Gold exhibition game.

"My dad practically fell out of the booth while my mom just started crying," Redshaw said. "It just shows how much that meant to them, knowing how important football is to me. They really had no idea that I was trying out for the team."

In fact, the only person close to Redshaw who knew that he was trying out for the team was his roommate, and that was simply a result of Redshaw waking up at 4:30 a.m. to work out with the squad.

"You wouldn't want to tell anybody about the tryouts because at any moment you could get cut," Redshaw said. "I didn't want to get anyone's hopes up, and especially not mine."

Despite the early practices and the grueling process, Redshaw quickly adds that he would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

"Putting on the gold helmet is truly special and I will cherish it forever," Redshaw said. "It is something that has epitomized my time here and my whole college experience."

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Courtesy of Lighthouse Imaging

Senior offensive guard Chris Stewart found playing under the Dome a different atmosphere than the one he came from.

DARRIN WALLS

Calvin Johnson, BCS berth highlight Walls' career

By ANDREW OWENS
Sports Writer

Many times life does not go as planned, even for a highly recruited football player. Irish senior Darrin Walls has constantly faced adversity over the past several years, but he has overcome it and contributed with four years of playing time, three as a starter.

In fact, Walls' football career nearly came to an abrupt end before he even had visions of running out of the tunnel at Notre Dame Stadium.

"My sophomore year in high school I had shoulder surgery and I thought my career was done," he said.

Walls fought through the pain and rehabilitation to return to the team his junior year. While things were starting to return to normal on the football field, he experienced tragedy in his personal life. Two of his cousins, ages seven and 30, died within a year of each other. Once again Walls experienced hardship and needed support and mental toughness to fight through it.

His senior year, as a five-star cornerback and prized recruit, he needed shoulder surgery again. Despite the setback, he received offers from Florida, Michigan and in-state schools Pittsburgh and Penn State, before eventually deciding that Notre Dame was the institution best suited for him.

When he stepped on campus

as a freshman, he did so as one of the top 30 players in the nation from the previous recruiting class, according to most websites. The expectations were high, and Walls was pressed into action from the get-go. He earned playing time during his freshman season in the secondary for the Irish, who entered the 2006 season ranked No. 2 in the country.

In his collegiate debut, Walls had the difficult task of covering All-American wide receiver Calvin Johnson of Georgia Tech. The Irish freshman held the future second overall pick in the NFL Draft to two catches and 16 yards in the second half. The shutdown of Johnson was crucial in helping Notre Dame earn a hard-fought 14-10 victory in Atlanta.

Walls immediately had to perform at a high level not only on the field, but also in the classroom. As a double major in psychology and sociology, he quickly learned how to balance academics and athletics.

"I mean it's been tough, especially my first couple years, because it was an adjustment to college academics and having to juggle football at the same time," Walls said. "It was difficult coming out of high school. Here you have so many things that demand time, but it's been good. Notre Dame has so many academic services for student-athletes to help with the transition."

One of Walls' most memorable moments occurred in his fourth game at Notre Dame. The Irish, fresh off a

47-21 loss at home to Michigan, were in East Lansing and trailing Michigan State 37-21 in the fourth quarter under extreme weather conditions. Walls and the Irish pulled off a dramatic comeback to win the game, 40-37, and save the season. Had Notre Dame lost that game, they would have fallen to 2-2 on the season and would have had to win their final eight games to earn a BCS berth.

While Notre Dame finished the regular season 10-2 and reached the Sugar Bowl, the fortunes of the Irish would soon change. The team endured a nightmarish 3-9 season in 2007 after the graduation of several stars, including quarterback Brady Quinn and wide receiver Jeff Samardzija.

Despite the team's struggles in the 2007 campaign, Walls' top memory from his time at Notre Dame occurred in the second week of the season. As the starting cornerback in a difficult environment at Penn State, he recorded his first interception on a pass from Anthony Morelli and returned it for a touchdown, the only time the Irish would reach the end zone that evening.

"It was a special moment for me," Walls said. "I was able to record my first interception and touchdown in my home state. My entire family was at the game and was able to see it."

When the Irish players returned to campus in the fall of 2008, their starting cornerback from the previous season remained home. Walls remained in Pittsburgh for the entire semester and sat out the football season due to personal reasons.

"I was at home for a semester," he said. "Basically I took some time off and tried to bounce back. I learned a lot



Senior cornerback Darrin Walls tackles a Navy ballcarrier from behind during Notre Dame's 35-17 loss on Oct. 23.

SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

from that experience. I learned to avoid taking anything for granted. It's important to appreciate what you have in life and I learned that Notre Dame is a special place and that I'm fortunate to be here."

But adversity was nothing new for Walls. He had been through it before and, once again, overcame it.

He returned to campus for the spring semester and regained control of the starting cornerback position. With much of the squad returning and what many considered to be a favorable schedule, the Irish headed into the 2009 season with high expectations, despite the many questions surrounding the program following a 7-6 season.

Walls started eight games and played in all 12 as an important member of the defense. Once again, hope turned into despair once the Irish finished the season 6-6 and fired coach Charlie Weis. It was another turning point for both the program and Walls.

Shortly after terminating Weis' contract, Notre Dame hired Brian Kelly to take over the football program. The change at the top also meant a completely new defensive staff, meaning Walls would play under his second head coach and fourth different defensive coordinator in his four seasons. Rather than use the experience as an excuse, he turned it into motivation for his final season with the Irish.

"I feel like sometimes it's good to have a new start and new beginnings," Walls said. "Every coach I've had has been a great coach and I've learned a lot. Good things are going to happen with this program."

He entered the season as the most experienced member

of the secondary, having started 21 of 32 games for the Irish. His 16 pass breakups ranked ninth in Notre Dame history at the start of the 2010 campaign.

Once the final snap takes place Saturday evening and the seniors sing the Alma Mater for the final time as players in Notre Dame Stadium, reality will sink in and they will realize that their collegiate careers will quickly come to a close. Walls, however, is intent on making the most out of the lessons he has learned and making a bright future for himself.

"I'm not really sure where the future will take me," he said. "We'll see what happens after the season and how everything turns out. I'd like to try to go to the NFL. If my football career is over I'd like to work with kids somehow and coach football at the high school level."

During the difficulties he has faced over the past several years, Walls has received the full support of others to help him overcome the setbacks.

"I'd say the support and the caring of everyone including the students and professors at Notre Dame has been great," he said. "Everyone cares about each other and it is a loving place. They tell you that when they're recruiting you, but it's true."

Not only has the Notre Dame community enabled Walls to fight through difficult times, but so has his family.

"I'd say my brother and sister don't know this, but they are my greatest inspiration for playing well and playing hard," he said. "They don't know, but I play for them and I just want to be a good role model for my family."

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DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Walls has four interceptions in his career with the Irish, including this one against Purdue during Notre Dame's season-opening victory over the Boilermakers.

BRIAN CASTELLO

Calling in plays earns back-up quarterback airtime

By LAURA MYERS
Sports Writer

Notre Dame's backup quarterbacks signal plays with dynamic and often humorous gestures. But Bryan Castello's favorite sign is more subdued.

"The victory kneel," the senior walk-on said. He demonstrated the sign by raising his right hand with his middle and ring fingers in the air, thumb and index finger together and pinkie folded.

"It's the signal of the Red Army, which is what we call the quarterbacks. And we won, so we get to do the victory kneel."

Castello nearly always stands to the direct left of Irish coach Brian Kelly when Notre Dame is on offense, and is caught on TV often when the cameras look to the sidelines for Kelly.

"We move it around, but more often than not I am next to Coach," Castello said. "Gives me a lot of TV time. ... I'll take whatever publicity I can get."

Castello tried out to be a walk-on in the spring of his freshman year with friend Chris Bathon, who graduated in 2010. Both made the team — Bathon as a defensive back and Castello as a quarterback.

"The worst thing that happens is you don't make it," Castello said. "But I worked hard enough, and I got on the team and have been for three years."

In those three years, the Pittsburgh native has practiced with many other quarterbacks, including several



Senior walk-on quarterback Brian Castello, 15, signals in "the victory kneel" in the closing moments of Notre Dame's 23-17 victory over Pittsburgh on Oct. 9.

from California.

"Our quarterback room is very California versus Midwest, with Dayne [Crist], Nate [Montana] and [Matt] Mulvey being from California and then myself, [Andrew] Hendrix, Luke [Massa] and Tommy [Rees] being from the Midwest," he said. "We send some jokes their way, they send some jokes our way. It's all in good fun though."

Castello has also gotten close with the rest of the walk-on players, in what they have termed the Walk-On Players Union.

"Everyone knows the trials

and tribulations of walk-ons, and that brings us all together," he said. "We all have a common characteristic: a lot of walk-ons are really good guys and that's who you want to surround yourselves with. So yeah, WOPU Nation."

The walk-ons have a formal every spring and make plenty of T-shirts. Castello said the saying on this year's shirt is especially meaningful.

"This year's is 'Going pro in something other than sports,'" he said. "Because it's true for almost everyone."

"Going pro" means law school for Castello, an aero-

space engineering major. He is in the process of applying, and listed Georgetown, Duke and Michigan as his top three choices.

"I know that's not your conventional path," he said. "Coming out of high school I knew engineering was the right choice for me. I don't know how I decided but I decided on aerospace. In the last year and a half or so, I started seriously considering law school to the point where now I'm 100 percent committed to law school."

While his technical expertise would help in practicing

patent law, Castello said he would like to branch out and work in intellectual property law.

"It's a lot like the 'Social Network' movie, like copyrights and trademarks and licensing," he said. "That's what I see myself doing."

"I'd be the one getting the people that deserve the money the money."

Castello's father, a Notre Dame alumnus, is also a lawyer. Castello said he talked to his dad, director of athletics Jack Swarbrick and several other attorneys in choosing to pursue law.

Castello acknowledged the help of Notre Dame's alumni network as he "moves closer to the real world," but his time at school is not over just yet, and he said the time spent with friends makes up his favorite memories.

"Different events you have with your friends, whether it be a certain social event you go to, or event you put together with your friends and teammates," he said. "I think those define your college career."

And if the seniors from WOPU Nation form a Bookstore Basketball team this spring, Castello will be on it.

"Basketball was really my first love from a sports standpoint," he said. "But you know what, football's really a great time. Especially at Notre Dame, you experience the tradition of Notre Dame football and it's something truly special."

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PAT COUGHLIN

'Turtle' emerges as special teams contributor

By MATT GAMBER
Sports Writer

Patrick Coughlin's 11 carries for 80 yards in last year's Blue-Gold Game didn't catapult him into competition for time in a crowded Irish backfield. But the walk-on's surprising performance in his first live reps at running back since eighth grade helped lay the foundation for meaningful time on kickoff and kick return as a senior.

"Playing in that game was the beginning of me thinking that I can really play with these guys and contribute to this team. It was definitely the first time I thought that," said Coughlin, who played receiver under the previous coaching staff. "The transition to running back through the whole spring — being in the trenches, carrying the ball, getting more involved in everything — all helped make me a lot more confident."

Fast forward to fall camp when, as a member of the scout kickoff team, Coughlin proved too much for the first Irish return unit to handle in practice. During those valuable reps, Coughlin was consistently winning the race down the field, going unblocked and making the tackle — the three keys to successful kick coverage.

"Finally, one day, we're watching film of the prior day's kick

return practice, and [Irish special teams coach Mike] Elston was just like, 'Who's that kid running down on scout team? You need to be running with the two-deeps,'" said Coughlin, who saw an opportunity that might someday lead to playing time. "That five-minute period of kickoff, I had a game-day Saturday mentality running down every play. Eventually, the coaches noticed that and got me in."

Coughlin, whose friends call him "Turtle," made his Irish debut when, during the opener against Purdue, an injury to a starter on kickoff gave him an opportunity to run with the first team. The move seemed temporary, however, as Coughlin remained in a backup role until the following Thursday morning leading up to the Michigan game.

"I got a text from [fellow walk-on Nick] Lezynski that said, 'the new depth charts are up, and you're starting on kickoff,'" Coughlin said. "I couldn't really believe it, so I got in my car 15 minutes earlier than I normally do and went to the locker room myself before class to check it out. Once I saw I was up there, the next 48 hours were just a blur — calling people, watching a lot of film and just making sure I was 100 percent prepared to succeed and not let it just be a one-time thing."

Coughlin was credited with two

tackles in Notre Dame's loss to the Wolverines, and he also made open-field solo tackles against Western Michigan and Navy. But that game against Michigan still stands out, Coughlin said.

"That was the most exciting game for me on the field because we started down early in the first half, came back with two touchdowns, and I got to run down the field while the place was just erupting," he said. "That was the coolest feeling of my football career."

A career that nearly ended after a shoulder injury cut short his senior season at Chicago's Brother Rice High School. Hoping to play a college sport, Coughlin dedicated himself to track, winning the Catholic League's high hurdles title and qualifying for the state meet. After Coughlin decided to attend Notre Dame, his high school coach convinced him to join the Irish track team. Injuries hindered his freshman track season at Notre Dame, and once sophomore year rolled around, it had become clear to Coughlin that he missed his athletic passion: football.

The turning point came at the 2008 Hawaii Bowl, where Coughlin traveled to watch his older brother Brian, then a walk-on who graduated last May.

"Walking on had always been in the back of my mind, but it wasn't



Senior walk-on running back Pat Coughlin's practice mentality earned him a spot on the kick return two-deep depth chart.

until that trip that I really realized how much I missed playing football," said Coughlin, an accounting major who hopes to follow in his brother's footsteps once again and achieve a Master of Accountancy from Notre Dame next season. "I saw the camaraderie of those guys, and especially of the WOPU [Walk-On Players Union] Nation, and that convinced me to give it a shot."

"I owe a lot to Brian. He was always there, as a guy who had been there before, telling me throughout that I could compete with anyone. I was just like yeah, whatever, but he kept it in the back of my mind that I could really play and not just be a scout team guy. And now I'm playing."

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HARRISON SMITH

Amid years of change, safety adapts in form

By BLAIR CHEMIDLIN
Sports Writer

When asked how he feels about this weekend's game against Utah being his last football game in Notre Dame Stadium, senior safety Harrison Smith replied quickly, "That question doesn't apply to me."

According to Smith and defensive backs coach Chuck Martin, Smith, who red-shirted his freshman year, will most likely be coming back for the 2011 season.

The 6-foot-2-inch, 214-pound Knoxville, Tenn., native has played both safety and linebacker during his college career. It wasn't until this season that Smith found stability on the field, when Irish coach Brian Kelly declared early on Smith would have only one position on the gridiron.

"He never would be an outside linebacker in our system," Kelly said during spring practices. "He's always been a safety. If he can't play safety, he can't play. It was pretty easy for that one."

Just as Smith's position on the football field has flip-flopped back and forth between safety and linebacker, and finally settled this season, his hairstyle has changed dramatically over the years as well. After keeping his hair short and tidy in high school, Smith decided to grow it out in college.

By fall of his sophomore year, his eyes were hardly visible beneath his bangs. The following year, this problem was remedied when his hair was long enough to part down the middle, no longer impairing his vision. His long hair became a favorite subject among friends and media alike, until Smith decided to cut it during the winter of his junior year.

These days, Smith sports a buzz cut.

"I just got sick of it," Smith said. "It was too long, took too long to dry."

Perhaps, however, he just became tired of everyone

bringing it up to him as a topic of conversation. Smith specifically cited his "mom and grandma" as giving him a hard time about his long hair more than anyone else.

Although Smith admitted some disappointing games and seasons during his time at Notre Dame, he hopes to use his last year to turn things around.

"Since I've been here, we haven't really had a strong team. That is something I really want to have. When people see us on their schedule, I want them to say 'Oh, no, this week is Notre Dame,'" Smith said. "That is something I want to bring Notre Dame back to — that when people think about us, they think about us as being a tough team — guys who aren't going to stop, guys who are disciplined, and just guys you really don't want to go up against for four quarters."

Smith said he feels bitter-sweet about coming back next year. He is certainly excited, and has high hopes for the fall season, but many of his fellow teammates from the class of 2011 will not be returning.

He reflected on how he has become close with all of his teammates by spending so much time together on and off the field over the years.

Smith particularly said he cherishes memories from the two times he brought back teammates with him to his home in Tennessee during breaks.

Smith had the opportunity to introduce his classmates, including then-quarterback Jimmy Clausen, running back Armando Allen, linebacker Brian Smith and receiver Duval Kamara, to his home as well as friends of his at the University of Tennessee. He has also spent time with Golden Tate, of



GRACE KENESEY/The Observer

Senior safety Harrison Smith makes one of his 10 tackles against Michigan State on Sept. 18. Smith, a three-year starter, has one more year of eligibility remaining.

Hendersonville, in their shared home state.

In addition to trips home with the boys, Smith recalled memories from summers spent at Notre Dame. To escape the heat and summer school, Smith and teammates often enjoyed trips to nearby lakes.

"One summer a bunch of us went to Six Flags in Chicago," he said. "It was me, Barry [Gallup], Sergio [Brown], Raeshon [McNeil] and Darrin Walls."

Many of the Notre Dame players consider Smith among their closest friends, even outside of football.

"He's my best friend," senior tight end Mike Ragone said of his defensive counterpart. "He loves me."

Ragone and Smith both look back fondly on memories of Halloween during their sophomore year at Notre Dame in which they dressed up in costumes together — Smith as "Shaggy," complete with the appropriate hair-do, and Ragone as "Scooby-Doo."

Close friend and roommate Barry Gallup, a fifth-year senior wide receiver, has much to say about Smith.

"He is the classic story of a kid who's transformed from a

timid freshman to the leader of our defense and a guy who everyone respects and wants to be around," Gallup said. "For a guy who is so violent on the field, he is the opposite off the field. He likes golf, cars, playing Madden with friends, investing and anything Tennessee-related."

"He's my best friend so I know a lot about him, and he's definitely the most loyal and trustworthy person I know."

Beyond football, Smith looks toward other future opportunities he would like to pursue. A management entrepreneurship major in the Mendoza School of Business, he hopes to someday own his own business.

"I've always wanted to own a bar and grill with my brother, Garrett," he said.

Smith recognized the outstanding academic opportunities Notre Dame offers as one of the many factors that contributed to his decision to leave Tennessee for Indiana. The University of Tennessee, along with other SEC schools competed for Harrison's enrollment in their football program when he was in high school.

But then he visited Notre Dame.

"I just felt at home. Everything about the school, the way the team acted together, how close they all were with one another; all of this helped me decide," he said.

Has it lived up to his expectations? Yes — except in one

area.

"Obviously we haven't won as many games as we thought we would," he said. "But at least for me, there's always next year."

Smith's football career began 13 years ago when he was in third grade. He went on a hiatus the following year in order to play competitive soccer instead. It was during this time that Smith's passion for football became apparent.

"My mom loves to tell the story," he says. "During that football season I would wear my helmet and all my pads, even though I wasn't playing. I used to dress up in all the gear because I missed it. I'd go out in the yard and pretend I was playing in a game, playing against the trees. I would hit the trees and run around them as if they were players. When the next season came around, I had to play."

He's played ever since, and plans to continue, in a fifth season at Notre Dame next fall.

These past four years Smith has experienced a variety of changes — changes in field position, hairstyles and coaching staff.

Next year, Smith hopes to witness even more changes, as he is determined to play a strong role in raising the Notre Dame football team to a more formidable status in the 2011 season.

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"[Harrison Smith has] always been a safety. If he can't play safety, he can't play. It was pretty easy for that one."

Brian Kelly
Irish coach

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The Evolution of "Hair-rison"

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CHRIS STEWART

Law school simply another challenge for Stewart

By LAURA MYERS
Sports Writer

Article 2.6.4 of the Notre Dame Law School's academic code strongly discourages first-year students from any employment, due to the "academic rigor of the required curriculum," but it doesn't say anything about first-year students starting for a Division I football program.

Offensive lineman Chris Stewart could be setting a new precedent.

Stewart, a fifth-year player who graduated from Notre Dame in three and a half years, is the first Irish player and the Football Bowl Series' only active player enrolled in law school.

But school has far from distracted him from his final year at Notre Dame.

"I'm definitely invested. I'm not giving up on my football career," he said. "Law school is second to football in my mind, because I've been at this longer and it's the more imminent thing."

"It's easy to stay focused because this is my last time around."

Stewart, by far the biggest member of the team at six-foot-five and 351 pounds, came to Notre Dame as a defensive tackle but did not play as a freshman. He switched to the offensive line

in the fall prior to his sophomore year.

He played in just six games before cementing himself as a starter. He has started 31 of his 37 career games, including every game he has played in the last three seasons, and has started more games than any other offensive player.

Being the most experienced member of the offense is not without its duties, Stewart said.

"It brings a lot more responsibility, culpability, everything like that," he said. "Whether it's spoken or not, people

look up to you, guys look up to you, coaches expect you to be there for guys after hours or on the field, all kinds of stuff. You really have to focus. And with so much going on in your own life, be able to focus on people too, because at the end of the day that's what it's about."

Of course, Stewart does have a good amount to focus on.

He is enrolled in 12 credit hours, which he said is the equivalent to 18 or 21 undergraduate hours.

He wakes up at 7 a.m. most mornings for homework or a workout. From there, he's in class until one. Preparation for football practice starts at two, and players are usually done between 6 and 7 p.m.

After three or four hours of studying, Stewart heads to

bed, where he aims for seven hours of sleep a night.

"Then I get up and do it all over again," he said.

Neither his football friends nor his law school buddies can grasp his lifestyle, he said.

"Everybody thinks I'm crazy," Stewart said. "I've definitely gotten that. It's cool, though. It'll pay off in the long run."

In fact, it already has. Stewart graduated in 2009 with an honors degree in history, with a self-designed concentration in Caribbean Studies. He was an ESPN First-Team Academic All-District honoree in 2009, and is an academic all-district selection again this year. Additionally, the National Football Foundation chose him as a National Scholar-Athlete — a designation that comes with an \$18,000 scholarship and puts him in the running for the William V. Campbell Trophy, which honors the best scholar-athlete in the country.

Fifth-year senior Barry Gallup, Jr., also an academic all-district selection, said the two joke about one day starting a business together.

"We're supposed to keep it a secret but he and I are talking about going into business sometime," Gallup said. "I'll run the business side and he'll handle the legal part. He's obviously an unbelievable kid, and a kid that everyone should look up to."

The name of the business would reference their size difference — Gallup is listed at 5-foot-11 and 190 pounds — but the two have yet to discuss what it would do.

"Make money somehow," Gallup said.

But aside from jokes,

"I'm definitely invested. I'm not giving up on my football career. Law school is second to football in my mind, because I've been at this longer and it's the more imminent thing."

Chris Stewart
senior offensive tackle



SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

Fifth-year offensive guard Chris Stewart has served as an elderstatesman among the offensive linemen this year.

Stewart tries to keep his football and law school lives separate as much as possible.

"I've evolved this rule that I don't study Friday or Saturday," he said. "That's time strictly devoted for football, for final preparations for the game. So I take a hiatus from that Friday after I leave the law school to that Sunday. It's better to have 100 percent focus on football for 48 hours."

That much of a break could leave him at a disadvantage, so he has to work even harder after each game weekend.

"Sunday and Monday, the days when we don't have as much going on here, I really have to buckle down and study and catch up," he said. "So I'm kind of playing catch up the whole time, but that works way better than bringing it on the road, trying to figure out complex ideas on a bus or on a plane. That's not smart."

And while Stewart carried a 3.536 grade point average as an undergrad, including a 3.834 in his final semester, he won't have any idea about his law school grades until the end of the semester.

"[There are] no midterms. We have take-home practice exams, and the whole grade is based on a test at the end of the semester," he said. "One four-hour test basically determines your whole grade."

After graduation, Stewart took a year of graduate classes, including a few law classes, before deciding to apply to law school. In spring 2009, while enrolled in a torts class

and one other special studies law course, he took the LSAT.

"Anyone who's in law school would tell you, unless they're a genius, that that test [is terrible]," he said. "It's one of the toughest tests I've ever taken."

During the admissions process, he was asked about his next step, and he answered honestly: Football would come before law school.

"Law school is a great career, you can always come back to it," he said. "The prospect, you really can't come back to it."

With nearly one year of law school done, Stewart will focus on his goal of getting to the NFL — after this season is over.

"Right now I'm going to focus on ending the season in a good way," he said. "... I want to be here as long as possible as a Notre Dame football player."

However, he made sure his intention of leaving school to go to the pros would not hurt his law school application.

"I made it very obvious that it's my goal to come back here and finish," he said. "Law school is only three years and I kind of have a year under my belt anyway. So it's not that big of a deal to come back and spend two more years to get a degree. That's not bad at all. I've been in school for like 10 years straight, even summers, so a break will be needed."

"And I'll have a chance to focus on football."

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SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

Stewart, the only FBS player to be enrolled in law school, has started every game but four in the past three seasons for the Irish.

CHRISTOPHER GURRIES

Two snaps last season highlight engineer's career

By JACK HEFFERON
Sports Writer

On a campus filled with individuals chasing career goals while performing community service and living active social lives, there may be no person on campus more well-rounded than senior receiver Chris Gurries.

Gurries' journey as a college football player began four years ago, when he turned down offers from several Division III and FCS schools, including Harvard and Wesleyan, to accept a partial academic scholarship to Notre Dame.

"My family was extremely supportive. They were actually the ones who really prodded me to walk on," Gurries said. "My dad put some of my film together, and we sent it in the summer before I got here. They set up a tryout for me, and I was able to make the team."

While Gurries has seen limited game action in his four years, he has had some memorable moments.

"Last year, I played two snaps in the home opener against Nevada, with my family and about half of my hometown looking on," said Gurries, who attended Bishop Manogue High School in Reno, Nev.

Memories of playing in Notre Dame Stadium may be lasting, but more important to Gurries are the strong relationships and lifelong friendships that he has

developed along the way.

"The best part of being on the team is just being around the guys," Gurries said. "There's a real sense of family."

In particular, Gurries believes that he and his fellow walk-ons share a unique bond.

"The life of a walk-on is a unique experience. It's good to have other people in the same boat as you," he said. "We call ourselves the Walk-on Players Union, the WOPU Nation. We keep each other motivated, keep each other's spirits high, and we're really tight on and off the field."

Another special part of that relationship, according to Gurries, is the older walk-ons helping out the younger players who may have the same issues. One player who really influenced him was fellow walk-on and fan favorite Mike Anello, a 2009 graduate.

"I really looked up to Anello when he was here," Gurries said. "We were both in Keough Hall, and he would give me advice all the time."

Off the field, Gurries is just as dynamic as he is on it, due to graduate in May with a degree in chemical engineering.

"Chemical engineering probably wasn't the easiest route to go, especially with the time commitment football requires and the workload of chemical engineering," he said. "As you could imagine, football and studies led to a lot of late nights. The key was to stay on top of



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Senior receiver Chris Gurries, 38, turned down offers from Division III schools to take a shot at joining the Irish through the walk-on process.

my work and not procrastinate too much."

With that degree Gurries plans to start dental school in July, and aspires to be an oral surgeon.

"Hopefully I'll be going to the University of the Pacific. They can't tell me officially yet, but I've been told that I'm pretty much in," he said. "I want to become a dentist because I

enjoy working with people and helping people, and it allows me to provide for a family."

Gurries looks forward to that family most of all, and his upcoming marriage to fiancée Sarah in July will be the first part of it.

"I love her to death and I think she is the most beautiful girl. We met in high school, and we just had our five-year

anniversary on Nov. 5. She is in nursing school in Salt Lake City and we plan to get married shortly after she graduates in June in Carmel, Calif., at the Carmel Mission," he said. "We both cannot wait for the four-year long-distance relationship to finally run its course."

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TOMMY SMITH

Football experience complemented by time in ROTC

By KELSEY MANNING
Sports Writer

As a business marketing major, a Naval officer in training and a safety on the Irish defense, the life of senior Tommy Smith is a balancing act. Smith does not view his busy schedule as a burden, however, but rather as the fulfillment of several lifetime

goals.

A Connecticut native and a third generation Domer, Smith dreamed about going to Notre Dame since his youth. And with a mom that swam at Notre Dame and a grandfather who walked onto the football team, Irish athletics are in his blood. Smith's first love is hockey, and several Division III schools in the New England area recruited him for both sports. But

once he got into Notre Dame, there was no looking back.

"The first time I was ever at the Stadium I was four years old. ... There is a picture of me and my sister in the old stadium before they redid it," Smith said. "I remember my first game here when I was in fifth grade we beat Arizona State, and even since before then I've always wanted to come here. And I always knew if I got in and came here I would want to try to play football, and just check my goals off one by one if I could."

That he did. As a freshman Smith started out on the Stanford interhall football, which went undefeated and won the championship game in the Stadium. From there he walked onto the Notre Dame football team the spring of his sophomore year, fulfilling a lifelong dream of being a part of the Irish.

"Football has been great," Smith said. "Ever since I thought about the idea to walk on, I thought about how much of an honor it would be to be part of the tradition, to line up against these guys in practice every day, see how hard they work and see if I could pick up on their work ethic. It's really helped me, not only in terms of work ethic, but I've gotten in much better shape physically, and it has made me a mentally stronger person."

Along with the tremendous commitment Smith has made to football, Navy ROTC takes up a great deal of his time. Smith

started seriously considering the Navy during his junior year of high school.

"I looked at Annapolis and I really liked it, but I ultimately decided Notre Dame was where I wanted to be," Smith said. "I figured I could get the best of both worlds being able to go to Notre Dame and be a part of the Navy, so I was able to get what I wanted in both areas."

Football and ROTC have all but dominated Smith's time at Notre Dame, yet he has managed to strike a comfortable balance between the two.

"It's definitely not easy to balance the two, but I really appreciate everything that Navy ROTC has done for me to play football and vice versa," Smith said. "I have to do a lot of the legwork but together we get things done. I have to miss a lot of things for ROTC and I really appreciate them letting me do that, especially since they're paying for my scholarship. ... I wouldn't be where I am right now without either one of them."

Smith said he has no regrets about taking on so much during his time here, especially since

he is entering the Navy after graduation. Smith was recently selected to one of the Navy's more elite programs, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), and will be training for that.

"As long as I can continue along this training pipeline,

"Ever since I thought about the idea to walk on, I thought about how much of an honor it would be to be part of the tradition, to line up against these guys in practice every day."

Tommy Smith
senior safety

and successfully make it through the next two years of training and school, then I would like to stay in the Navy for longer than the initial four-year commitment, possibly 10 to 15 years," Smith said.

Even if Smith does successfully complete EOD training,

studying business law at Notre Dame has also made him consider the possibility of attending law school after his time in the Navy. Another option is a post-military career in the United States Secret Service. Whatever Smith decides, he is grateful for his entire Notre Dame experience.

"Everything has been worth it," he said. "I don't get a lot of sleep some nights but I'm ready to go the next morning. I have no regrets at all because both [ROTC and football] have been great for me."

Contact Kelsey Manning at kmanning3@nd.edu



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Senior safety Tommy Smith not only walked onto the football team, but also has been involved with Navy ROTC for four years.

ND'S OPPONENTS LAST WEEK & THIS WEEK

	(4-5) L 34-13 Wisconsin	Michigan
	(6-3) W 67-65 Illinois	@Purdue
	(9-1) W 31-8 Minnesota	BYE
	(8-1) W 42-17 Arizona	@Arizona St.
	(4-5) W 23-13 Wake Forest	@Duke
	(5-3) BYE	@UConn
	(3-6) L 26-22 Central Mich.	Eastern Mich.
	(6-3) W 76-35 East Carolina	Central Mich.
	(6-3) W 64-27 Rice	@Houston
	(8-1) L 47-7 TCU	@ND
	(5-4) L 42-22 Air Force	@Kent St.
	(6-3) W 34-33 Arizona St.	@Arizona

Follow our live blog from the press box throughout Saturday's game at ndsmcobserver.com/sports/irish-football/irish-insider-extra

PRESS BOX LIVE BLOG

Utes, coming off ugly loss, pose tough test for ND

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Editor

Two weeks ago Notre Dame may have been upset 28-27 by Tulsa, but the argument could be made that No. 14 Utah's loss last week was even more devastating for the Utes.

Utah (8-1), then ranked No. 5, hosted No. 3 TCU for a Mountain West Conference showdown, only to be blown out by the Horned Frogs 47-7. Whether the Utes are reeling from that result or not, Irish coach Brian Kelly said he expects to see the same high-powered Utah team fans are accustomed to.

"Generally my experience has been a team that has a lot of confidence coming in, is not all of the sudden going to lose all of their confidence," Kelly said during a press conference Tuesday. "They are going to chalk it up to, hey, we had a bad day, let's put that behind us, maybe we don't even look at the film. Let's get going on Notre Dame."

According to what Utes coach Kyle Whittingham said in a press conference two days after the defeat, Utah planned to do just as Kelly expected.

"By this afternoon we will have the film [of the TCU game] watched, and it's time

to move forward and not let a hangover affect us," Whittingham said. "That would be the most disappointing thing, if this affects two games."

Even after suffering the 40-point loss, Utah enters Notre Dame Stadium as the favorites — a role Kelly does not seem to mind the Utes having.

"What a great opportunity for seniors and everybody in our program to get back on

the winning ways by beating a great football team," he said. "I really haven't been big on trying to draw those David versus Goliath kind of matchups, and I certainly don't see that in this game. I see a very good football team in Utah, and one that needs to play up

to those standards."

Utah's standards include a 31-4 record over the last three seasons, including an undefeated slate and Sugar Bowl victory in 2008. This season Utah topped Pittsburgh 27-24 in an overtime battle to open the season, and hardly looked back before facing TCU. In the seven games between Pittsburgh and TCU, the Utes scored 56 or more points four times, only scoring less than 30 points once.

"It's a confident group, certainly. You look at some of the

"What a great opportunity for seniors and everybody in our program to get back to the winning ways by beating a great football team."

Brian Kelly
Irish coach



Utah quarterback Jordan Wynn unloads a pass during No. 3 TCU's 47-7 victory over the then-No. 5 Utes Saturday. The sophomore has accounted for 14 touchdowns through the air this season.

scores that they have had," Kelly said. "They really believe in what they do offensively. It's a physical presence."

"So I think what I take away from Utah is a personality. They clearly have a personality on the football field. Very confident about what they can do, and they have exhibited that on a very consistent basis."

Yet that personality is not

overlooking Notre Dame. Whittingham cited both Notre Dame's present team and individuals and its tradition and history as formidable opponents this weekend.

"They have a tremendous receiver in [junior] Michael Floyd. ... They have good size up front and good size on defense," Whittingham said. "[Sophomore linebacker] Manti Te'o is a big, physical presence in the middle. It's

just what you expect out of Notre Dame.

"When you think of Notre Dame, you think of the Four Horsemen, Knute Rockne, 'Rudy' the movie. ... The tradition, the guys they had there — Joe Montana, Joe Theismann. That's everything that embodies what Notre Dame is."

Contact Douglas Farmer at dfarmer1@nd.edu



Observer File Photo



Observer File Photo

Helmets held high

The senior class of 2011 has experienced a trying four years of football at Notre Dame. A 3-9 freshman year, losing three out of four games against Navy and numerous last-second, heartbreaking losses are just the tip of the iceberg when describing the gridiron hardships that this senior class has gone through.

Despite the losses and a coaching change before their final year at Notre Dame, the members of the original class have held strong and seem intent on finishing their career on a positive note. No matter the result against Utah, the seniors will stand tall with the rest of their graduating class and proclaim words that have kept them going strong through it all:

“And our hearts forever, praise thee Notre Dame. And our hearts forever, love thee Notre Dame.”



Observer File Photo



TOM LA/The Observer



TOM LA/The Observer

Clockwise from top: Senior nose tackle Ian Williams lines up against a Navy team which defeated the Irish for the first time since 1963 on Nov. 3, 2007; Senior wide receiver Duval Kamara catches his fourth touchdown pass of the season against Duke on Nov. 17, 2007; Senior linebacker Kerry Neal looks for a tackle in Notre Dame's Sept. 13, 2008, victory over the Wolverines; Senior running back Armando Allen looks for daylight in a Nov. 21, 2009, loss to UConn; Senior running back Robert Hughes tackled in Notre Dame's Oct. 17, 2009, loss to USC.

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Record: 4-5

AP: NR Coaches: NR



Brian Kelly
head coach

First season at Notre Dame

career record:
175-62-2
record at ND:
4-5
against Utah:
0-0



Bob Diaco
Def. Coordinator



Charley Molnar
Off. Coordinator

2010 Schedule

Sept. 4	Purdue — W
Sept. 11	Michigan — L
Sept. 18	@ Michigan St. — L
Sept. 25	Stanford — L
Oct. 2	@ Boston College — W
Oct. 9	Pittsburgh — W
Oct. 16	Western Michigan — W
Oct. 23	@ Navy — L
Oct. 30	Tulsa — L
Nov. 13	Utah
Nov. 20	Army
Nov. 27	@ USC

Head-to-Head

ND OFFENSE	UTAH DEFENSE
Scoring: 26.0 ppg (72nd)	Scoring: 17.78 ppg (14th)
Total: 402.0 ypg (49th)	Total: 300.0 ypg (13th)
Rushing: 113.44 ypg (100th)	Rushing: 111.0 ypg (17th)
Passing: 288.56 ypg (17th)	Passing: 189.0 ypg (25th)
Turnovers against: 19 (92nd)	Turnovers for: 14 (74th)
Fumbles lost: 7 (50th)	Fumbles rec.: 7 (48th)
Interceptions: 12 (101st)	Interceptions: 7 (75th)
Sacks Allowed: 17 (58th)	Sacks: 23 (24th)
T.O.P. for: 26:49 (117th)	T.O.P. against: 30:45 (80th)

Statistical Leaders

ND OFFENSE	UTAH DEFENSE
QB TOMMY REES 39-63, 413 yards, 4 TD	LB CHAZ WALKER 79 total, 6 TFL, 1 sack
RB CIERRE WOOD 59 rush, 274 yards, 2 TD	LB MATT MARTINEZ 53 total, 1.5 sack, 1 INT
WR MICHAEL FLOYD 55 rec., 728 yards, 8 TD	DB LAMAR CHAPMAN 46 total, 9.5 TFL, 5.5 sack
WR TJ JONES 22 rec., 287 yards, 3 TD	DE CHRISTIAN COX 45 total, 2 sack, 2 Fbl. Rec.
TE TYLER EIFERT 14 rec., 192 yards, 1 TD	DB BRIAN BLECHEN 44 total, 2.5 TFL, 2 INT



Douglas Farmer

Sports Editor

At this point, Notre Dame's back is very much against the wall. At 4-5, the Irish need, absolutely need, two wins to qualify for a bowl game.

Unfortunately, one of those wins will not come this week. There is simply no conceivable way a freshman quarterback throwing to a cast of replacements can lead a stumbling Notre Dame team past the high-powered Utes.

Sure, Utah is coming off an ugly loss. Sure, Notre Dame is at home. So the Irish have some things going for them, but those things don't usually add up to a saving value. That takes time, which against the wall, the Irish don't have.

FINAL SCORE: Utah 35, Notre Dame 14



Matt Gamber

Sports Writer

How can you predict a 4-5 Notre Dame team to beat a Utah squad that was an outside contender to play for the national title less than a week ago? How can you think the Irish, led by a freshman quarterback making his first start, can overcome the absence of three of their most explosive offensive threats? How can you rationalize that a Notre Dame team that just lost to Navy and Tulsa can win its first Senior Day game since 2007?

I don't have an answer to those questions, but I have to believe that for one day, the Irish at least have a chance to put it together and send their seniors out with a win. Just once. Just maybe.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 23, Utah 17



Eric Prister

Associate Sports Editor

Once again, on paper this game seems quite cut and dry. Utah is the superior team in almost every facet of the game, and that advantage is exponentially increased by the amount of injuries suffered by Notre Dame starters. With Crist, Allen, Riddick, Rudolph, Williams and Calabrese out, Notre Dame should have trouble moving and stopping the ball.

But this Irish senior class has been through a lot. I think the losingest class in Notre Dame history has one game left in them. Why shouldn't it come on their Senior Day?

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 24, Utah 23

HEAD T

Irish Offense vs. Utes Defense

ND PASSING
This year's Irish offense can only be described as injury-plagued. Junior quarterback Dayne Crist tore his patella tendon in Notre Dame's loss to Tulsa, so freshman Tommy Rees will take over under center for Notre Dame, making the first start of his career.
Junior receiver Michael Floyd

has been banged up most of the year, but will play against Utah, while sophomore receiver Theo Riddick and junior tight end Kyle Rudolph will once again be inactive against the Utes. Notre Dame will turn to junior receiver John Goodman to fill the hole in their receiving corps.
The Utah defense ranks 25th in the NCAA against the pass, giving up only

189 yards per game. They have also recorded seven interceptions and 23 sacks, so the Irish offensive linemen will have its work cut out for them giving Rees enough time to find open receivers and avoid making mistakes. Otherwise, it could be a long day for Rees and the Irish passing game.
EDGE: UTAH

ND RUSHING
With senior Armando Allen out for the season with a hip injury, the Irish running game, which has already struggled so far this season, could be in even more trouble. Notre Dame averages only 3.8 yards per carry, and if Allen's contributions are removed, they average only 3.1.
The Irish will turn to freshman

Cierre Wood and senior Robert Hughes for contributions on the ground. Wood has gained 4.6 yards per carry on 59 carries, and despite a heavy workload, Hughes is picking up 5.3 yards per rush. Wood and Hughes have the potential to be a speed and power combination rush attack if the line gives them space to run.
The Utes are tough against the run

as well. Ranking 16th in the NCAA against the run, Utah is led by junior linebacker Chaz Walker, who is top on the team with 79 total tackles. A steady ground game could significantly help Rees, but it may be hard to come by against the staunch Utah defense.
EDGE: UTAH

ND SPECIAL TEAMS
Senior David Ruffer continues to be perfect for his career and for the season on field goal attempts. He has made all 13 tries this year, and continues to be the bright spot on the Irish special teams.

Utah ranks 18th in the nation in kick return defense, an area in which the Irish have struggled. Field position will be important against the Utes, so Notre Dame will need to improve in that area.
EDGE: NOTRE DAME

Brian Kelly's offense was not performing up to standards with Dayne Crist under center, and having Tommy Rees as the starter will certainly not expand the playbook. The injuries to the offense, combined with some questionable play-calling against Tulsa inspire little confidence. That being said, Kelly is well respected as an offensive mind, so it would be unwise to count his offense out, no matter the opponent.
EDGE: UTAH

ND OFFENSIVE COACHING



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O HEAD

Utes Offense vs. Irish Defense

Utah
Utes
Record: 8-1
AP: 15 **Coaches: 15**

Sixth season at Utah
 career record: 48-17
 record at Utah: 48-17
 against ND: 0-0

Kyle Whittingham
head coach

Aaron Roderick
Off. Coordinator

Kalani Sitake
Def. Coordinator

2010 Schedule

Sept. 2	Pittsburgh
Sept. 11	UNLV
Sept. 18	@ New Mexico
Sept. 25	San Jose State
Oct. 9	@ Iowa State
Oct. 16	@ Wyoming
Oct. 23	Colorado State
Oct. 30	@ Air Force
Nov. 6	TCU
Nov. 13	@ Notre Dame
Nov. 20	@ San Diego St.
Nov. 27	BYU

While only averaging 225 passing yards per game, sophomore quarterback Jordan Wynn has been effective for the Utes. He has thrown 14 touchdown passes so far this year, including three-touchdown performances against Pittsburgh and Colorado State.

Senior receiver Jereme Brooks and sophomore receiver DeVonte

Christopher have combined for over 1000 yards receiving and nine touchdowns, and will likely give the Irish secondary trouble.

Notre Dame's pass defense ranks 80th in the nation, and has had trouble stopping prolific passing attacks. Senior cornerbacks Gary Gray and Darrin Walls will have their work cut out for them against Utah's offense.

The Utah offensive line has also given up only four sacks all season, placing them fourth in the nation. If Notre Dame is unable to put pressure on Wynn, the secondary will have a difficult time hanging with the Utah passing attack.

EDGE: UTAH

Senior running back Eddie Wide leads the Utes' rushing attack. Averaging 4.9 yards per carry, Wide has scored nine touchdowns and has crossed the goal line in six out of Utah's nine games.

Senior Matt Asiata adds a second dimension to Utah's rushing game, averaging 4.7 yards per carry and scoring six times throughout the sea-

son. As a team, the Utes gain 5.2 yards per rush, which could be difficult to stop for an on-again, off-again Irish rush defense.

Notre Dame has held two opponents — Boston College and Western Michigan — to under 50 yards rushing, but has also given up over 200 yards on the ground four times, including to a Navy team which ran

for 367 yards while averaging over six yards per carry. The Irish front seven will need to play their best game in order to stop Utah's solid rushing attack, which could be difficult with nose tackle Ian Williams and linebacker Carlo Calabrese on the sideline.

EDGE: UTAH

Kicker Joe Phillips has made nine out of 10 of his field goal attempts, including a long of 48 yards, and 48 of 49 extra point tries.

Punter Sean Sellwood is averaging 43 yards per punt, including a

long of 67 yards and has kicked nine punts inside the 20-yard line. Combined with Notre Dame's struggles returning punts this season, Utah should have control over the field position battle.

EDGE: UTAH

The co-offensive coordinators for Utah, Aaron Roderick and Dave Schramm, are also the coaches of the wide receivers and tight ends, respectively. This gives a good indication of the focus of the Utah offense.

Many different Utah receivers have thrived in their spread offense system, and this group is no different. Utah will mix things up, but Roderick and Schramm will fall back to the pass in key situations.

EDGE: UTAH

Sam Werner
Sports Writer

FINAL SCORE: Utah 34, Notre Dame 27.

Utah may have been exposed as a top-five team against TCU last week, but the Utes are still a legitimate top-25 squad. Even worse for the Irish, they're a talented team with a chip on its shoulder after getting embarrassed a week ago. Given Notre Dame's injury woes and the fact that freshman quarterback Tommy Rees will be making his first career start it would be easy to see the Irish fold early. Call it a gut feeling, but I can't shake the notion that this class will draw more from the emotions of Senior Day than previous classes. It may be wishful thinking, but Rees did look impressive in his first start. The Irish might not win this one, but they'll be in it until the end.

Laura Myers
Sports Writer

FINAL SCORE: Utah 44, Notre Dame 27

After a painful, painful loss to No. 5 TCU last weekend, Utah will come in to Notre Dame Stadium with something to prove. Not only will the Utes win over this desperately depleted Irish squad, they will run up the score just to show they can.

I hope I'm wrong, and the senior class plays with the emotion of a team that has been battered for way too long.

But really, the only difference between this game and the past two senior days is that we're expecting it this time.

Head-to-Head

UTAH OFFENSE	ND DEFENSE
Scoring: 41.0 ppg (9th)	Scoring: 24.89 ppg (62nd)
Total: 421.78 ypg (30th)	Total: 393.11 ypg (77th)
Rushing: 175.89 ypg (36th)	Rushing: 164.56 ypg (79th)
Passing: 245.89 (41st)	Passing: 228.56 ypg (80th)
Turnovers against: 18 (84th)	Turnovers for: 16 (52nd)
Fumbles lost: 10 (100th)	Fumbles rec.: 6 (65th)
Interceptions: 8 (45th)	Interceptions: 10 (37th)
Sacks Allowed: 4 (4th)	Sacks: 24 (20th)
T.O.P. for: 29:15 (80th)	T.O.P. against: 33:11 (117th)

Statistical Leaders

UTAH OFFENSE	ND DEFENSE
QB JORDAN WYNN 128-197, 1579 yards, 14 TD	ILB MANTI TE'O 51 solo, 100 total, 7 TFL
RB EDDIE WIDE 107 rush, 523 yards, 9 TD	CB GARY GRAY 45 total, 4 TFL, 1 INT
RB MATT ASIATA 110 rush, 515 yards, 6 TD	S ZEKE MOTTA 39 total, 1.5 TFL, 1 INT
WR JEREME BROOKS 40 rec., 460 yards, 4 TD	S HARRISON SMITH 37 solo, 66 total, 2 INT
WR D. CHRISTOPHER 32 rec., 572 yards, 5 TD	CB DARRIN WALLS 20 solo, 30 total, 2 INT

OUR PICKS

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SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer



SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

A season of streaks

The Irish Class of 2011 opened its final season with a convincing 23-12 victory over Purdue before spiralling into a three-game losing streak which included last-minute losses to both Michigan and Michigan State.

With a 1-3 record, the Irish faced the prospect of a loss season before a three-game winning streak raised their record to 4-3. The winning streak included a 44-20 rout of Western Michigan on Oct. 16.

Notre Dame barely had time to enjoy that rout before facing Navy at the New Meadowlands Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. Navy took control of the game early, and for the third time in four years beat Notre Dame. The following week, the Irish fell to Tulsa at home.

With possibly only three games left in their careers at Notre Dame, the seniors will need two wins to reach a bowl game.



TOM LA/The Observer



MAGGIE O'BRIEN/The Observer



GRACE KENESEY/The Observer

Counter-clockwise from top: Seniors Robert Hughes, Armando Allen and Emeka Nwankwo, from left, sing the Alma Mater; senior cornerback Gary Gray prepares for a play during Notre Dame's 37-14 loss to Stanford on Sept. 25; seniors Ethan Johnson and Brian Smith, from right, leap in an attempt to block a Pittsburgh field goal; senior running back Robert Hughes gains an extra yard during Notre Dame's 44-20 victory over Western Michigan on Oct. 16; senior safety Harrison Smith attempts a tackle against Michigan State.

ARMANDO ALLEN

Running back helps Irish in every possible way

By LAURA MYERS
Sports Writer

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the Sept. 17 edition of The Observer.

"You got my hat!" Armando Allen exclaimed as he entered the Loftus Center for a photo shoot with The Observer Tuesday. The senior running back grabbed the small green hat and placed it, at a slight angle, on his head, ready for his close-up.

Allen donned the leprechaun hat in celebration after Notre Dame's win in the Hawaii Bowl on Dec. 26, 2008, and turned it into a post-game ritual in 2009.

"We all laughed, since he's about 5'5" on a good day," said sophomore wide receiver Theo Riddick, a former part

of the running back corps with Allen, who is actually listed at 5-foot-10. "He'd get us all laughing and cracking up. It was a good joke."

But two games into his senior year, Allen isn't kidding around anymore.

"Some people joke about me being short, the size of a leprechaun," he said. "But I do it in respect to Notre Dame. That's my way to say I respect Notre Dame. I tip my hat to it."

Going to work

That is not to say that Allen hasn't been taking his role at Notre Dame seriously up to now. He was the leading rusher for Notre Dame in 2008 and 2009, with 585 and 697 yards, respectively. His mark of 697 last season came in just eight games, as he missed two games with a sprained ankle and another two with a

fracture in his hand.

But Irish head coach Brian Kelly admitted before Notre Dame played Michigan that he wasn't sold on Allen coming into the season.

"The way college football is set up we can't have contact with him all summer long, so you have a two-month period where you don't even talk to him much," running backs coach Tim Hinton said. "It takes a little bit to bring out the real personalities when you just don't know each other very well."

Especially with sophomore Cierre Wood coming up quickly behind him, Allen had to prove himself all over again.

"It was just practicing hard every day," Allen said. "That was one of the concerns we had, and I just took it under my initiative to go out there and work hard and give it all I had every day in practice."

The competition only helped both of them, Allen said.

"That's always positive," Allen said. "When you look at our group, from me to Cierre to Robert Hughes to Jonas Gray, we all know that we have a great amount of talent and we all push each other. We use it as motivation. We all know we've got great backs here."

But through his work ethic, the coaches got to know Allen and made the decision to keep him in the starting spot.

"He really does a good job of understanding and learning, taking notes in the meeting room, and understanding the game plan when he gets on the field," Hinton said. "And he's practiced hard. The young guy has practiced tremendously hard."

"He really has played the

game with a passion and physicality and he's done a nice job in practice of doing the same thing," Hinton said. "He's a very consistent performer. He brings his lunch pail with him every day and goes to work."

Racking up yardage

Through the season's first two games, Allen had a heavy workload. He ran the ball 33 times for 182 yards and a touchdown, caught two passes for nine yards and returned two punts for 47 yards.

Allen has shown the same versatility throughout his career. His 119 career receptions eclipsed Darius Walker's record of 107 career receptions by a running back.

"I think it's really just being in the right place at the right time," Allen said. "Gaining that trust from the coaches."

Hinton said there's only one way for Notre Dame to take advantage of Allen's many abilities.

"Keep giving him the ball," Hinton said. "That would be the best thing we can do is keep giving him the ball, get him in space as much as we can. He's been an elusive guy. He's been making guys miss. We're certainly going to work very, very hard to get as many touches as he can have. And his job is to hang onto the ball and perform every time he gets that opportunity."

"I think he will."

Allen would like to get another opportunity like the one he had in Notre Dame's 2009 win over Michigan State, when he took the snap in the wildcat formation and connected with former Irish receiver Robby Parris for a five-yard touchdown pass.

"I wouldn't mind," he said. "That's definitely something that's always been in the back of my head. I'd like to get a chance to do it."

In fact, Allen has just one feat left to accomplish: a long, breakaway run. Though he runs for a dependable aver-



JULIE HERDER/The Observer

Senior running back Armando Allen has rushed for more than 2,000 yards in his Notre Dame career.

age of 4.6 yards per carry, his career long is 30 yards, a mark he set on Oct. 2 against Boston College.

"It's always good to have a great breakaway run," he said. "I think growing up, being a senior, you take everything for what it's worth, but it always felt good."

That 2010 is his last time through adds a sense of urgency to his season.

"I do feel like I'm running out of time," Allen said. "I know that I owe Notre Dame so much, for allowing me to come here and take part in something special, so I really want to go out on a good note."

Leading by example

Allen's seniority has its upside, though, in an increased leadership role on the team. The coaches selected him to be a captain for Saturday's game against Michigan.

"It was a great honor to go out there and be a captain and lead this team against Michigan," Allen said. "It says a lot about what I've been doing here and to me it was a great honor to go out there and show that I can do this and I can be in the right place for my teammates."

Despite his penchant for wearing leprechaun hats, Allen is usually not showy, Hinton said.

"He's a quiet, unassuming personality," Hinton said. "Some guys are real flashy, with flamboyant personalities. Armando really doesn't come across that way. He's quiet with leadership behind the scenes."

His early struggles to prove himself made the role even more special, Allen said.

"I'm a more lead by example type guy," he said. "I started off shaky coming in with the new coaches but right now I understand that I'm here to do whatever I can and just lead by example."

Hinton assessed Allen's leadership in the same way.

"Leadership comes in many styles," Hinton said. "His work ethic and his on-the-field toughness have been the things he's really displayed."

Being a leader is even more vital this week, Allen said, as the team tries to shake off a heartbreaking loss and move on to its first road game.

"I think it's very, very important," Allen said. "The biggest thing is just to go out there and make sure that everybody has forgotten about last week and is moving on to this week, that we've got a new challenge in front of us."

At this point, Allen is serious about continuing in the same way he has started the season, being an example for his teammates with hard work in practice and performance when it counts.

"We've been very pleased with what he's doing," Hinton said. "Obviously his challenge right now is to do it consistently for the next ten weeks. That right now is the biggest challenge that Armando has ahead of him. He can't be self-satisfied. He's got to be hungry to be better tomorrow, the next day and the next day until the season ends."

Contact Laura Myers at
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WU YUE/The Observer

Allen started 26 games over the last four seasons before suffering a season-ending injury against Western Michigan on Oct. 16.

BRIAN SMITH

Emotions, two TDs define linebacker's four years

By ERIC PRISTER
Associate Sports Editor

In his player bio on UND.com, the first word used to describe senior linebacker Brian Smith is emotional, and it is that emotion that has enabled Smith to become the active leader in games played for Notre Dame.

"When I'm out on the field, I embrace the emotion, the energy from the crowd," Smith said. "I'm very passionate about what I do, and so to be described as emotional lets people know, 'Yeah, that's real me on the field.' You just have to have the emotional advantage, that even if you aren't, that you play like you are the baddest on the field and nobody can stop you. Having the kind of attitude makes you a better player and so that gives you that edge against the person you're going against."

Smith has played in all but three games throughout his Irish career, and has not missed a game since his sophomore season. He leads all active players in tackles with 180 and has added two touchdowns to his résumé throughout his career.

"I can't even explain [the feeling of scoring a defensive touchdown]," Smith said. "My first touchdown, I didn't know what was happening. I told everyone that I felt like I was in someone else's body watching it through their eyes, because it was such an adrenaline high, being out there. It was just crazy, being able to get into the endzone and get points for the team, especially against teams like

Michigan and Boston College, doing anything I can to help my team win. It's just a special feeling."

That first score came in Smith's freshman year against Boston College. He intercepted Boston College quarterback Matt Ryan — now with the Atlanta Falcons — and returned it 25 yards for the score.

"One thing I'll always remember is seeing [former Irish coach Charlie Weis] put his arm around me, because me and coach Weis, we had conversations, but you never really saw real emotion from him," Smith said. "But when I scored that first touchdown, you saw that real emotion from him on the sidelines, and that's the one thing that stuck out to me."

The beginning of Smith's career at Notre Dame was a tenuous one, as he had already committed to Iowa when he was offered a scholarship from the Irish, just two weeks before signing day. For Smith, that was when the real decision process began.

"The decision process was kind of a rocky one because I was committed to go to Iowa for about eight months during my senior year of high school, and then all of a sudden, two weeks before signing day, Notre Dame offers me," he said. "It kind of put me at a crossroads because it was like, 'If Notre Dame didn't want me then, why do they want me now?' And I kind of had a mind block about it. But then the best advice I got was, 'What can Notre Dame do for you? That was a dream school which can do something for you which Iowa can't.' Hearing that from my father, I had to make the

"The best advice I got was 'What can Notre Dame do for you? That was a dream school which can do something for you which Iowa can't.' Hearing that from my father, I had to make the choice to come here."

Brian Smith
senior linebacker



Senior linebacker Brian Smith attempts a diving tackle of Michigan quarterback Denard Robinson during Notre Dame's 28-24 loss on Sept. 11.

choice to come here."

Smith's career did not get any easier when he arrived on campus. The Irish went 3-9 during his freshman season, and have not recorded a winning season in his four years as a member of the football program, but Smith said he has not been disheartened by the ups and downs that Notre Dame has endured.

"Coming to Notre Dame is expecting to be a part of excellence," he said. "Even though our football seasons haven't been what everyone has wanted them to be, I still feel like I've been a part of excellence, being around these guys and these coaches. Living a first-class championship lifestyle will bring championship results. In years to come, everyone in the world will be able to see that."

Keeping that championship

attitude was not easy for Smith. He was moved from outside linebacker in a 3-4 defense to inside linebacker in a 4-3 defense during his sophomore and junior years. Smith said that changing positions was difficult, but in the end gave him a greater understanding of the game.

"The process changing from outside to inside was very hard, because as a middle linebacker, you have to know what everyone is doing on the field," he said. "I give a lot of credit to [former Irish defensive coordinator John Tenuta], because he taught me a lot about football and that, with my coaches now, [defensive coordinator Bob] Diaco and [Irish coach Brian] Kelly, I feel like there's nothing on the football field that I don't know. So now, transitioning, I feel like I can play anywhere on the field now that I've played middle linebacker, because that's the captain of the defense, making calls, adjustments and checks. So I feel like I can play anywhere. Wherever they stick me, I feel like I'm going to do a very good job at it."

Position on the field is not the only change Smith has experienced during his time at Notre Dame. He has played under two head coaches and three defensive coordinators, which can make finding a comfort zone difficult. Smith said he has used the coaching changes as a learning experience, as well.

"It makes you not only a better player but also a better man, because in the real world you're going to face changes, day in and day out," he said. "Having a new staff was different, but you have to adjust. When I'm in the working world, my boss is going to change and I have to adjust to what he's going to do. My position

changed — one day your position in the office is going to change, and you have to make adjustments. It keeps you on your toes and keeps your edge razor-sharp, because you have to always keep a razor-sharp edge to be competitive, not only on the football field, but in life."

Smith said many people have made an impact on his life since being at Notre Dame, but coaches and former players in particular have taught him the lessons he needs both on the field and off.

"Because we're Notre Dame, even though we haven't done as well, we're still in the national spotlight."

Brian Smith
senior linebacker

"There have just been a lot of guys who have played the game here and are still around," he said. "Guys like [former Irish players] Reggie Brooks and Chris Zorich, coach Tenuta and [former defensive coordinator] Corwin Brown, that have played the system and have taught me since I was a young pup in the system — those are guys who I always look to and try to keep in touch with because they are the roots of the man I want to become in the real world." Despite a career full of changes, successes and failures on the field, Smith said he still believes that he made the right choice in coming to Notre Dame.

"[Our class] has seen it all," he said. "Living a first-class, championship lifestyle is always number one for me, and I feel like, even through all these wins and losses, the loss column especially, that I've still been a part of excellence. Because we're Notre Dame, even though we haven't done as well, we're still in the national spotlight. Because we are Notre Dame, we are known for our excellence, and so I feel like being a part of this establishment has been the biggest blessing for me."

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Smith has played in 43 games in the Notre Dame uniform, and in those 43 games has managed to score two defensive touchdowns.

MATT ROMINE

Notre Dame fulfills two dreams for lineman

By ANDREW OWENS
Sports Writer

When many scholarship football players step on campus for the first time as a freshman, they have dreams of someday playing on Sundays. Irish senior Matt Romine has realized since the start that there is life after football.

Despite being one of the most highly recruited prospects in the nation coming out of Union High School in Tulsa, Okla., the 6-foot-5, 292-pound offensive lineman said he

is always focused on academics. He chose Notre Dame to give himself the best chance to fulfill his two dreams.

"The main reason I came here was to be a business major and I picked marketing because I really like the shoe industry," Romine said. "I'd like to work for Nike someday and either market their shoes or work in the Nike football department. It's always been my dream to work in the Nike

marketing department if the NFL doesn't work out."

While Romine has excelled in marketing while at Notre Dame, the football end of things has not always been so easy. In his freshman year, he played in each of the first two games before getting injured during the third. He missed the rest of his first season on the team. That injury, however, has opened the door for Romine to play another season if he so chooses.

"I medically redshirted after getting injured after the third game of my freshman season, so I have the opportunity for a fifth year," he said. "The decision of whether I return or not will be made after the season is over."

If Romine chooses to return, he would be one of several returning linemen on a very experienced unit, which could be the key to an improvement in wins and losses.

Injuries are not the only roadblock that Romine has faced during his time at Notre Dame. This year, he has played

under the third different offensive line coach the Irish have employed in four seasons. John Latina led the unit in 2007 and 2008, Frank Verducci in 2009 and Mike Elston is currently coaching the linemen.

Romine has not used the experience as an excuse, but rather as a challenge to get better and as a valuable lesson for his future.

"It's taught me to adapt to anything," Romine said. "I've had three offensive line coaches in four years and they've all had a different style and system and want something different. Going through all that has taught me to adapt and be ready to change for any situations that arise."

Through it all, he has always been able to depend on the support of his family.

"My parents have been so influential in my life," Romine said. "I've been injured a lot during my four years here so relying on the support of my parents has been huge for me. They come to a lot of home games and are here for me a lot."

After battling through injuries and coaching changes for three years, Romine earned his first career start earlier this season against Pittsburgh. He considers it his most memorable moment at Notre Dame.

"I finally got the chance to

"I finally got the chance to get on the field and run out of the tunnel as a starter. It was great to help lead the team to a win because Pittsburgh is one of our biggest wins this season."

Matt Romine
senior offensive tackle



TOM LA/The Observer

Senior offensive tackle Matt Romine has used his time at Notre Dame to prepare for life after football.

get on the field and run out of the tunnel as a starter. It was great to help lead the team to a win because Pittsburgh is one of our biggest wins this season."

Even if Romine opts to depart from Notre Dame following his graduation this

spring, he will leave with a very favorable outlook of his time here.

"I didn't realize coming in how tightly knit the Notre Dame family is," he said.

Contact Andrew Owens at aowens2@nd.edu

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Agustín Fuentes

Professor, Department of Anthropology



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Race matters, but it remains a misunderstood and complicated part of American life. Drawing on sources from the social and biological sciences Professor Fuentes will lay clear what race really is, and importantly, what it is not.

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FALL 2010 SCHEDULE

- ☞ 9.4.10 (vs. Purdue University)
"Plagiarism and College Culture"
Susan Blum, Professor, Department of Anthropology
- ☞ 9.11.10 (vs. University of Michigan)
"Religion and American Public Life: The 50th Anniversary of JFK's Houston Speech on the Separation of Church and State"
Richard Garnett, Professor, Law School
Cathleen Kaveny, John P. Murphy Foundation
Professor of Law, Law School
John McGreevy, Professor, Department of History;
Dean, College of Arts and Letters
Vincent Phillip Munoz, Associate Professor,
Department of Political Science
Michael Zuckert, Nancy Reeves Dreux
Professor of Political Science,
Department of Political Science
- ☞ 9.25.10 (vs. Stanford University)
"Mercifully Eradicating the Irish: The Strange Case of Lord Macaulay"
Robert Sullivan, Associate Professor, Department of History
- ☞ 10.9.10 (vs. University of Pittsburgh)
"American Politics at the Breaking Point"
Robert Schmuhl, Walter H. Annenberg-Edmund P. Joyce Professor of American Studies and Journalism, Department of American Studies
- ☞ 10.16.10 (vs. Western Michigan University)
"The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Enduring Consequences of Extremism"
Rory McVeigh, Professor and Chairperson, Department of Sociology
- ☞ 10.30.10 (vs. University of Tulsa)
"Tradition and Identity in Contemporary Church Music: Three Case Studies"
Margot Fassler, Keough-Hesburgh Professor of
Music History and Liturgy, Department of Theology
- ☞ 11.13.10 (vs. University of Utah)
"What Race Is, and What It Is Not: Why This Is Important"
Agustín Fuentes, Professor, Department of Anthropology



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EMEKA NWANKWO

Waiting only yields benefits for Florida native

By JACK HEFFERON
Sports Writer

"Good things come to those who wait" may be an overused cliché, but overused clichés are often overused for a reason: they are true.

Senior defensive end Emeka Nwankwo can certainly argue for the validity of that phrase, after waiting in the wings several times in his career before stepping into the spotlight, with success.

Nwankwo was a four-star recruit out of Miami Beach, Fla., who was named all-state twice at offensive line at Chaminade-Madonna Prep. But when it came time to commit to a college, he faced a difficult decision.

"At the end of the whole process, it was either going to be Notre Dame or Florida," Nwankwo said. "I felt that I needed to get out of Florida, so I thought Notre Dame was my best option."

Once he arrived on campus, Nwankwo had to accept several important changes in his life. While he transitioned from life at home to more independence on campus, he also had to transition from offensive line to defensive tackle on the football field.

"Going away from home for the first time and being on your own was different, almost surreal. It was a lot of fun though, too," Nwankwo said. "As far as football goes, the transition to defense wasn't too difficult. I played defen-

sive line in high school, so I was able to step right in day one."

He was also helped in this transition by some older players with whom he developed a close relationship early in his Notre Dame career.

"Older guys like [defensive lineman] Trevor Laws, [linebacker] Maurice Crum, and [tight end] John Carlson really showed me the way things were done, and how to go about your business," Nwankwo said.

After mostly working with the scout team and slowly climbing the depth chart in his freshman year, Nwankwo was able to bust into the gameday rotation his sophomore year.

"It was nice to start to get noticed, and the coaches start to get at you a bit more," he said.

That year was Nwankwo's breakout year of sorts, as he played in seven games, and had two tackles. More promising, though was that he saw action in five of the final six games, and his stock seemed to be rising. But during his junior season last year, Nwankwo seemed to get lost in the depth chart, and did not play a snap during the season. Once again, Nwankwo was forced to lie in wait, and the experience was frustrating.

"That was by far my worst year here," Nwankwo said.

Nwankwo persevered, though, and now is playing the biggest role of his career in what has become a redemptive season for him.

"This year has been my best year here. I've really enjoyed it," said Nwankwo, who has played in five games and has three tackles on the season.

Part of the reason that this year has been so enjoyable for him is all of the fun he has off the field, especially with his friends on the team, Nwankwo said.

"A lot of the guys on the team are really close ... [Senior running back] Armando Allen, he's my little brother," Nwankwo said. "And [junior nose tackle] Brandon Newman, he's the clown of the whole team. No doubt I'll be friends with those guys for life."

Nwankwo and his teammates are always up for some friendly competition, as well.

"I'm the current Notre Dame Madden king, I'm pretty much unstoppable," he said. "I've got the best car on campus, too."

Now that his senior year is coming to a close, Nwankwo has begun to look back and reflect on his time here.

"I'll take a lot from these four years: family, brotherhood, and some good memories. Now that I think about it, I'm really going to miss this place."

But while it may seem to be the end of Nwankwo's Notre Dame career, he has not yet ruled out returning for a fifth season of eligibility.

"I might come back next season, but there's a whole lot of other options," he said. "It's really up in the air right now."

Regardless of his plans for next



SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

After not getting playing time his junior year, senior defensive end Emeka Nwankwo has appreciated every moment of it this year.

year, Nwankwo will graduate this spring with a degree in Psychology, although he has plans in a different field.

"My family has been really supportive, but football doesn't mean that much to my parents, since they grew up in Nigeria. To them, the most important thing is getting that degree, and I got it," he

said. "I really want to go back for grad school, though, and get my MBA. Eventually, I plan to be in the business world."

Like so many other things for Nwankwo, future success is just a matter of time.

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KERRY NEAL

Linebacker credits family for helping him succeed

By ANDREW GASTELUM
Sports Writer

He began the journey as a boy, and the road turned him into a man.

Senior linebacker Kerry Neal vowed that Notre Dame has changed him into the person he is today, admitting that he came here as a boy out of high school — albeit a 6-foot-2, 220-pound boy.

"This four-year run has been great," Neal said. "I have really grown as a man with everything that I have accomplished and Notre Dame has really opened my eyes up to a lot of things."

The linebacker came to campus as a highly-touted recruit from Bunn, N.C., a small, rural city from which Neal finds inspiration.

"I play for my hometown and for all the people there that are able to see me do something I love," he said.

Of those people, Neal finds a special place in his heart for his mother, who worked two jobs to support the family, and his grandmother, who cared for Neal when he was younger.

"They mean everything in the world to me and I am

doing everything to help give them a better life," Neal said. "I feel like I owe my life to them."

In his first three years at Notre Dame, Neal totaled 70 tackles and five and a half sacks, with most of them coming as a defensive end during his sophomore and junior years. But this year, under the new 3-4 defensive scheme, Neal made the transition to outside linebacker almost seamlessly. He has since recorded a career-high 32 tackles through nine games this season, eight more than his previous personal record of 24 tackles in his sophomore year.

"At first, I was really nervous at making the switch, but I worked out in the summer and improved my agility," Neal said. "Now I am much more comfortable being able to run in open space and use my athleticism to the team's advantage."

The move to linebacker made Neal realize the importance of offseason work and taking advantage of every opportunity to get better.

"There are no days off in the offseason," Neal said. "You have to come with [the effort] every day and work harder than the other man."

"This four-year run has been great. I have really grown as a man with everything that I have accomplished and Notre Dame has really opened my eyes up to a lot of things."

Kerry Neal
senior linebacker



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

Senior linebacker Kerry Neal chases after a fumble during the season opener against Purdue on Sept. 4. He did not recover the fumble, but did record one tackle for loss in the Irish victory.

But football isn't the only matter that Neal has striven to improve in. Off the field, the linebacker takes great pride in his studies and asserts that the quality education was a major factor in coming to Notre Dame.

"At Notre Dame, you can get the best of both worlds," said Neal, who committed to Notre Dame before taking an official visit. "In order to play football, you have to have good grades and it'll all pay off once you get that degree from one of the best schools in the country."

Neal plans on graduating

with a degree in sociology, from which he hopes to give back to the community if he doesn't play in the NFL.

"I'm never going to put a stop to my dreams [of playing in the NFL], but if that doesn't work out I'll have a degree," he said. "I love working with kids and would love to give back to the youth, knowing how much I have been through in my life."

In addition to leaving with a degree, Neal could graduate being the only senior in the class of 2011 to play in every game of his Notre Dame career. But when asked what

he will remember most about his college experience Neal didn't mention his performance on the field or putting on a gold helmet. Rather, he spoke of the friends he made while playing football.

"I wouldn't be the same without the bonds that I have made with all of my friends and my roommate [senior running back Robert Hughes]," the senior said. "We are all brothers and it's like being in a giant family with moments that I will never forget."

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MICHAEL GARCIA

Waiting game may be safety's primary specialty

By MEGAN GOLDEN
Sports Writer

If at first you don't succeed, become friends with senior safety Michael Garcia, and try, try again.

Garcia's journey toward success began during his senior year of high school, when he received an envelope in the mail from the Notre Dame Admissions Office.

"I was one of those waitlist guys," Garcia said. "When you're on the waitlist it's almost like you have to want it more because you didn't get in to begin with. That was probably the most stressful thing."

Garcia proved, however, that he wanted it more than anyone.

"I did everything I could. I became good friends with [Director of Admissions] Bob Mundy, and I put on the full court press on the admissions office," Garcia said. "Then I got a call May 14, 2007, and that's when I got into Notre Dame."

Coming from a family of Notre Dame graduates, Garcia always dreamed of being accepted into his father's alma mater and walking on to the basketball team.

"My two brothers were already at Notre Dame, and my dad went here. They never played any Division I sports, but that's what I always wanted to do," Garcia said. "I love football, and I love basketball. As a kid, I always had a goal of walking on to the basketball team, [but] I remember my freshman year they didn't have basketball tryouts."

Once again, Garcia was not going to stop there.

"I said, 'Hey, I might as well try football.' I was pretty good at football in high school, so I walked on," Garcia said. "[I] didn't think in a million years that I would make it and get called back."

The early mornings and strenuous workload ultimately brought all of the walk-ons together.

"The process was excruciating getting up around 4:15 for 4:30 workouts in the freezing cold of January and really not talking to anybody at the time because the other walk-ons are your competition," Garcia said. "You had to really want it, and I think that's how we came really close. We were all competitors at the beginning, especially the walk-ons. We were all competing for the same spots, and then that grew into friendship because we were in this together once we all made it."

Since those strenuous early workouts, the walk-ons have banded together and formed WOPU Nation, the Walk-On Players Union.

"WOPU Nation is Walk-On Players Union, an elite group of people," Garcia said. "It's awesome, it's a brotherhood. We have each other's back. That's part of the WOPU Nation, and we take pride in that."

Garcia has been ready to enter a game since day one. Two weeks ago against Tulsa, however, he went the extra step to make sure he would be ready if his number

was called.

"You share a number with another walk-on, and it's hilarious. I share a number with [senior tailback] Pat Coughlin," Garcia said. "They pulled a switcheroo on me last game because Coughlin was on kickoff, and I was going to be on kickoff. I was on the two-deep, so I was like, 'Okay, there's a slight chance that I might get into the game.' I actually showed up to the game, and my number was 29. I knew I couldn't be number 29, so I asked for a new number. So I came back, and I wore number 34."

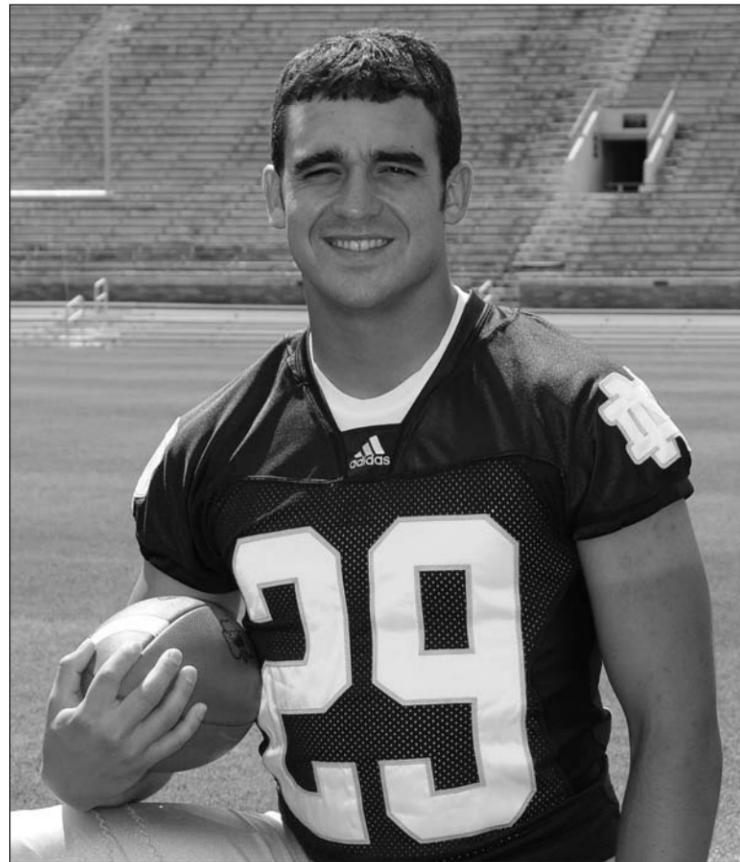
Garcia swapped jerseys and texted his mom about the number change just in time for her to see his debut on national television.

"It was my first time getting in and playing for ND. It was awesome," Garcia said. "As a walk-on, that's what you work for, to consistently help the team out, and that's how everyone thinks, and everyone wants their shot to compete for ND, compete for Our Lady. I feel like I was finally ready."

"It was awesome getting in, running down the field in the house that Rock built. I had chills coming down my back, it's something that I'll remember forever."

Playing football for Notre Dame taught Garcia life lessons.

"I learned a lot about people, I learned a lot about leadership, I learned a lot about courage. You learn so much. With whatever circumstances you're given, you just have to take it and roll, and you have to do the best that you



Courtesy of Lighthouse Imaging

Senior safety Michael Garcia was initially wait-listed by Notre Dame, but through perseverance earned his way into the school.

can," he said. "Being a walk-on, we're prepared for any situation."

Garcia is grateful for all of his supporters who helped him get the opportunity to play at Notre Dame.

"I have to thank my parents, my family, my two brothers, my

friends and all who've supported me. I have to thank the coaches for giving me the opportunity," he said. "It's just been an amazing journey, an amazing experience."

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STEVE BOTSFORD

After initial denial, walk-on chases, and fulfillments, dreams

By JOSEPH MONARDO
Sports Writer

As a lifelong Notre Dame fan from Chicago, senior linebacker Steve Botsford considers himself lucky to have played for the Irish.

Botsford always dreamed of

playing football for the Irish, but he had to wait. He was not recruited by Notre Dame, so he enrolled at the University of Indiana before transferring to Notre Dame after his freshman year.

"When I got rejected from Notre Dame after high school, I knew I wanted to try to

transfer," Botsford said. "And then once I got in, I knew I was going to take the next step and see what I could do to with this football thing."

As a sophomore, Botsford became a resident of Fisher Hall and began his Notre Dame football career immediately as a member of his inter-

hall team. In the spring, Botsford decided to take the next step and pursue his goal of joining the varsity squad.

"[Tryouts were] rough," Botsford said. "We started out three days a week, and then we went to five days a week at, like, 5:30 in the morning. It's funny looking back on it now, but during it was horrible."

Most people would not be able to recount 5:30 a.m. practices with a hearty laugh, but he managed to do just that. Botsford, who describes himself as "fun-loving" and "goofy," makes sure that everyone knows how happy he is to be part of the Notre Dame football team.

"I've always got a smile on my face, I'm always goofing around," Botsford said.

While Botsford said he cherishes the fact that he has a role on the team, he harbors other passions as well. Although the economics major already has one job offer, he hopes to work on Wall Street in the future.

"I like economics a lot," Botsford said. "It's tough, but it's fun, and it's helping me get a job. It's something that's really easy to talk about when you get in an interview."

Botsford said his biggest surprise at Notre Dame has been managing both football and academics. Although those two areas require a huge time commitment, he still finds time to relax.

"If I'm not studying or playing football, I'm probably either watching movies or playing the NCAA [football] video game," Botsford said.

The movies Botsford may be watching, however, might surprise the average Notre Dame student. While the movie buff likes movies like "The Matrix," "Remember the Titans" and "Rudy," his favorite is the 1942 classic "Casablanca."

"It throws people off because it's old, but I love it," Botsford said.

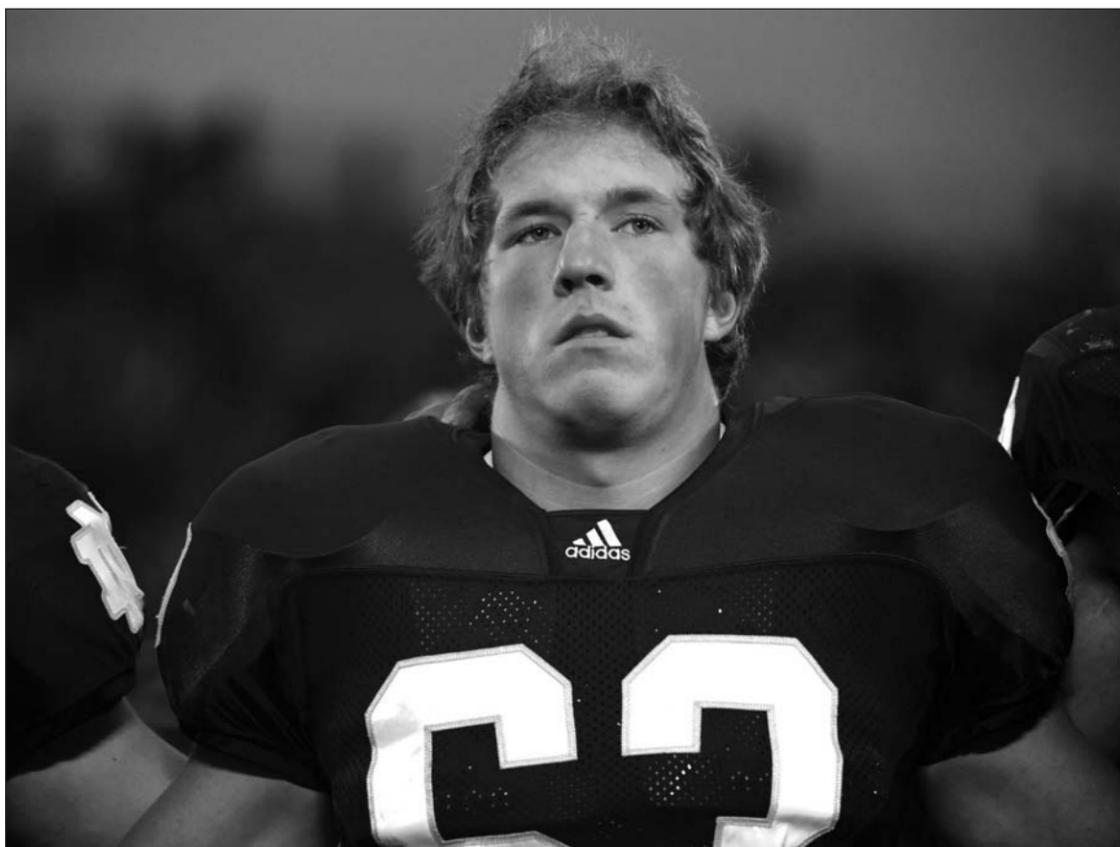
As he prepares for his final home game, Botsford said he has come to appreciate his time at Notre Dame.

"The team has been great and everything I hoped it would be," Botsford said. "Growing up a Notre Dame fan, obviously you want to be on the team, but you hope it's a whole bunch of good guys out there who really work hard. And you get here, and everyone does. Everyone works hard, and everyone is really nice and open."

Botsford said he has learned a lot during his time at Notre Dame.

"It's taught me a lot about time management, and just working for a team," Botsford said. "In high school, you get a little more credit, and as a walk on, you don't really get that. But you still work hard and you get success from seeing the team succeed."

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SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

After he was not admitted into Notre Dame, senior walk-on linebacker Steve Botsford enrolled at Indiana University for a year. Soon thereafter, the Chicago native enrolled at Notre Dame and joined interhall football.

DUVAL KAMARA

After setting freshman records, Kamara settles in

By MEAGHAN VESELIK
Sports Writer

Growing up in Jersey City, N.J., Duval Kamara was never interested in playing football at Notre Dame, but once he arrived on campus, he knew he'd found everything.

"It [Notre Dame] actually wasn't my first choice. I was actually interested in University of Miami but that didn't go too well with the parents," Kamara said. "They weren't too sure about Miami, a big party school and all that. They thought I needed to be focused."

"Then I actually came here for a visit out here, and I liked it. The guys were cool, the coaches were great, I thought it was a perfect fit."

Finding that perfect fit enabled Kamara to set freshman

records for receptions and receiving yards, allowed a smooth transition to college life and find a family he wouldn't have found anywhere else.

"I think that's one of the things about Notre Dame's football team — the guys in the locker room," he said. "These are the guys that you'll talk to for the rest of your life, your brothers, your family. That's just another reason I came to Notre Dame, just the guys around me. I'm going to keep in touch with these guys for years and years to come. It's a pretty special thing."

Kamara's close relationship

with his teammates began that freshman season, when his older teammates aided him in taking his game to the next level as he prepared to wear his No. 18 Irish jersey.

"Coming in as a freshman, I thought it was a pretty smooth transition. You know you have older guys like [graduated players] David Grimes, D.J. Hord, they helped us out, the young guys, myself and Golden [Tate], the freshmen coming in," he said. "They helped us and prepared us for the offense and basically college ball."

The leadership that Grimes and Hord showed became instilled in Kamara, who tries to emulate his former teammates around his new, younger teammates and set an example that they too can follow. He feels that a large part of this comes with being a senior on the team.

"It feels good to actually be a senior, you know, to be at the top of the locker room. The guys look up to you, and you have to play that role," Kamara said. "I think that comes with the territory of being a senior. And just ways that you can lead the team, ways that you probably don't think about it but you are leading the team just because you are a senior."

Kamara leads with his approach to practice every day and an attitude that he knows will lead to better results.

"Just going out there and working every day, and show-

"Just knowing I'm doing it for someone, and another thing is the program. Just doing it for years to come, and eventually a National Championship, and I can say I was part of building that."

**Duval Kamara
senior receiver**



TOM LA/The Observer

Senior receiver Duval Kamara looks for a few extra yards during Notre Dame's 35-17 loss to Navy on Oct. 23. Kamara ended the game with six catches for 56 yards.

ing the guys that you have to work every day, every day that you're supposed to and if you do little things, it'll all work out," Kamara said.

Another important lesson that Kamara works to instill in his underclassmen teammates is that the team surrounding them is everything, and that's what makes Notre Dame more special than any other university.

"I think the guys in that locker room know it's all about the players around you," he said. "Those are the guys that you see every day, those are the guys who, when you're going through your worst times, those are the guys that are going to be around you. I mean it's four years and four years is a long time."

Kamara also said he believes the team's family atmosphere makes the players more willing to help each other improve.

"You don't really get sick of them," he said. "These are guys who are going to tell you that if you're doing something wrong, they're going to tell you it's wrong. Those are the type of guys you need around you. You don't need someone who's just going to kiss up to you. That's just what you need, a brother, a family member, who's going to tell you what you're doing right and what you're doing wrong."

Kamara said his classmates have made his college experience what it is.

"I think we're a close group of guys, I think we've been close since we came in freshman year, and that's what makes it special," he said pointing to the group of seniors around him. "It's like everyone's from all over the globe and we just have one thing, football, to bring us

together. I mean it's special. We all know what we want in life, we all want to achieve the highest level of this sport, and we just knew that coming in, and that's one of the things that brought us together."

For Kamara, the past four years seem to have flown by, and he tries not to focus on that as he approaches senior day and his final game in Notre Dame Stadium.

"It's reality but I try not to think about it, so it's unreal. It seems like yesterday we just came in as freshmen," he said. "It all went by so fast. But I really don't think about it, it's just another chapter of life. It's in the past right now, that's how I think about it. I try to stay level headed."

Although he tries to stay level headed, Kamara said he can't help but recall the feeling of stepping into Notre Dame Stadium and wearing his No. 18 jersey for his first game with the Irish, a feeling he knows he won't be able to find anywhere else.

"My freshman year, I can remember it like it was yesterday," Kamara said, "I mean I was just struck, shocked about how many people were out there [in the Stadium]. That's just part of going to Notre Dame, it's something special, it's a special place."

He's able to laugh and smile about it now, but Kamara said he wasn't so relaxed when he first was called in to play.

"My first game — oh man, I was nervous. My first play of freshman year, I went out there and my legs are shaking, my arms are shaking, and I'm like, 'Oh man, I don't want to mess up, I don't want to mess up.' And I actually caught my first pass on my first play," he recalled.

That first play led to a standout freshman season in

2007 in which Kamara surpassed legendary Irish receiver Tim Brown's rookie record for catches with 32, including four touchdown catches, and he recorded 357 receiving yards in 11 games.

Kamara continued to be a contributor for Notre Dame in his sophomore and junior seasons, playing in a combined 25 games with 14 starts. So far this season, he has played in six games, notching 68 receiving yards.

"It's something special," Kamara said.

"It's kind of like you're going to war with your guys. You walk down the hall, tap the walls, tap the 'Play Like A Champion Today' sign. It's something special, you can't explain it unless you're part of it. It's something hard to understand, but it's something special. Walking out and just looking around at 80,000 people."

Although he's no longer a freshman, Kamara said he still feels the same nervous excitement that he felt as a first year player whenever he emerges from the tunnel with his Irish teammates.

"I always have butterflies, that's just who I am. But as a senior, you go out there with the confidence, a different swagger about yourself, you just want to perfect everything you do," Kamara said.

Driving that swagger and desire for perfection for Kamara are both his family and teammates.

"Just knowing I'm doing it for someone, and another thing is the program. Just doing it for years to come, and eventually a National Championship, and I can say I was part of building that."



TOM LA/The Observer

Kamara broke multiple Notre Dame receiving records for a freshman in his first year in 2007.

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GARY GRAY

Outgoing safety gives Irish a shot of athleticism

By LAURA MYERS
Sports Writer

In Gary Gray's first game in an Irish uniform, he returned an interception for 41 yards. A little more than a year later, in the senior cornerback's first start, he led the team with six tackles and returned a 30-yard interception.

Now, he is a steady presence in Notre Dame's backfield.

In Notre Dame's first game of 2010, a 23-12 win over Purdue on Sept. 4, Gray led the team with eight solo tackles, and tallied nine in total.

He followed that with five tackles against Michigan and Pittsburgh, eight against Western Michigan and nine against Tulsa.

"I think I've developed as a player, having more urgency," Gray said. "Watching film more, learning your opponent. In high school, you didn't watch film, but here you have to, to be ready."

Gray said he became more of a leader as a senior, and his performance in games defined his leadership style.

"I'm not much of a talker, but I talk about plays on the field, and what I do," he said. "Guys see that, and they want to make plays too."

At every new step Gray has had a fast start — but it took a while for him to get there.

A four-star recruit out of

Richland Northeast High School in Columbia, S.C., Gray chose Notre Dame over offers from Florida, Florida State and Michigan, among others. After finishing his high school career with a trip to the U.S. Army All-American Bowl, he enrolled in January 2007 to be available for spring practice with the Irish.

But injuries kept Gray out of much of the spring and all of the 2007 season. He had surgery on his shoulder prior to the start of that season.

"It was tough, not being able to play," he said. "I hurt my arm in spring practice,

then my recurring shoulder injury was bad [in the fall]. But it gave me a chance to adjust to college."

He played his first game in Notre Dame's 35-17 win over Michigan on Sept. 13, 2008. In the fourth quarter, he

grabbed the interception off a pass from Wolverine quarterback Nick Sheridan. He ran the ball from Notre Dame's 42 yard line to Michigan's 17 before being tackled.

"That was great. I read the coverage right, picked it and ran as far as I could," he said.

Gray's mother was in the stands to see him make the interception, which made it even better, he said. But he noted a playful grudge against defensive tackle Ian Williams, one of his best friends on the team.

"I mean, going into the season we didn't think we'd be 4-5 right now, but we've been close in all our games except two. It's tough, but there's still season left."

Gary Gray
senior cornerback



GRACE KENESEY/The Observer

Senior cornerback Gary Gray has formed a cornerback-tandem with classmate Darrin Walls throughout the 2010 season.

"I could have scored, but Ian didn't block for me," he said. "... He didn't block, that's why I got tackled."

Gray played in nine games as a sophomore, but then took a leave from the team for personal reasons. He returned as a junior for the 2009 football season and soon became a fixture in the defense. He played in 11 games and started the last seven.

In his first career start, against Southern California on Oct. 17, 2009, he recorded six tackles and intercepted a pass from Matt Barkley. He ran the pass to the USC 13 yard-line, setting the Irish up

for a touchdown three plays later.

In his career Gray has intercepted four passes and helped to break up many more. His position in pass coverage led him to get a tattoo on his back, of a hawk carrying a football. The tattoo reads "Ball Hawk."

"It just means I'm always around the ball when it's in the air," Gray said. "When it's in my vicinity, I'm going to be around it."

Gray had the tattoo done as a junior.

"My godfather always talked about getting to the ball," he said. "We always joked about me getting a tattoo, like squeezing the air out of a ball, but I already got it. It has meaning behind it."

Outside of practice, Gray is just like any other student — he listens to music, does homework and plays video games with friends. He has grown close with most of the football team's seniors, he said, and spends most of his time with them.

Defensive end Emeka Nwankwo is the one to beat when playing Madden NFL, Gray said, but he is "great at FIFA," a soccer video game.

His favorite place on campus is related to football as well: the Guglielmino Complex, where players lift weights, study, have meetings and eat dinner.

"We spend half our time here," he said.

Gray will graduate in May with a degree in sociology and a minor in computer applications. He said he could continue with the computer applications major if he comes back to the team for a fifth year — something he would like to do.

"Hopefully I can do that," he said. "We'll see how things work out this year."

Through three years of action, Gray's time at Notre Dame has included plenty of upheaval, as the defense changed schemes in each year he played.

"It hasn't affected me that

much. I think I'm a quick learner," he said. "I think I adjusted okay."

He said the coaching change worked out well.

"It's been tough with the coaching changes," he said. "But the transition was good. [Irish coach Charlie Weis] is doing great with the Chiefs, and I really like what [Irish coach Brian Kelly] brings to the table, and I like our defensive staff."

Gray said the problems the team has faced since his freshman year have given the Irish a fighting character.

"Through the turmoil, us losing, us being 3-9 that year and having mediocre years the next two years after that has been tough, but you just have to keep fighting," he said. "That's what we always do."

That character has been evident in this season as well, he said.

"I mean, going into the season we didn't think we'd be 4-5 right now, but we've been close in all our games except for two," he said. "It's tough, but there's still season left."

But there is still a lot to accomplish in 2010. Gray said talk among the seniors is focused on avoiding a senior day loss.

"Just get the win for the seniors," he said. "They don't want to leave their last game in Notre Dame Stadium with a loss. It was tough last year, seeing my friends leave with a loss in the Stadium. We don't want that to happen again."

With coming back for a fifth year as a possibility, Gray's view of that senior game may be a little different than that of most; but his reflection on his four years at Notre Dame summed up the experience of this year's senior class.

"It didn't start well with the records," he said. "But we've always fought in every game this year. We had our ups and downs, but we keep fighting. We're the Fighting Irish."



TOM LA/The Observer

Gray has recorded four interceptions and eight pass break-ups during his Notre Dame career. Five of those pass break-ups came this season, including two against Michigan State.

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MARTIN QUINTANA

Time at ND teaches Quintana the 'right manner'

By ANDREW GASTELUM
Sports Writer

This Saturday, senior outside linebacker Martin Quintana will take his last steps onto the field he has worked so hard to find. Then he will trade in his helmet for a briefcase and swap his jersey for a suit, venturing into corporate America in December.

But heading into his last game, the fifth-year senior said he plans nothing different to highlight the significance of his situation.

"As always, I am just going to soak it all in, but this time it'll be for the last time," he said. "I always had a dream to play college football and it is definitely something that has defined my time here."

The walk-on senior graduated last year with a degree in finance, but came back for one more year to earn a degree in Spanish, and, of course, to play football.

"It was very important to me and my heritage to receive this degree," Quintana said. "I also had one more year of eligibility and I was lucky enough for [Irish coach Brian] Kelly to let me return and be a part of his team."

Concerning the first-year coach, Quintana had nothing but good things to say, expressing praise and even foresight into where he sees the team

going in the future.

"I have no doubt that [Kelly] is going to do big things here with the program," Quintana said. "I am just glad to say that I am a part of the start of something special."

But returning to a team with a new coach meant changing positions from defensive end to outside linebacker, something that could have been very intimidating for a walk-on who has not received much playing time.

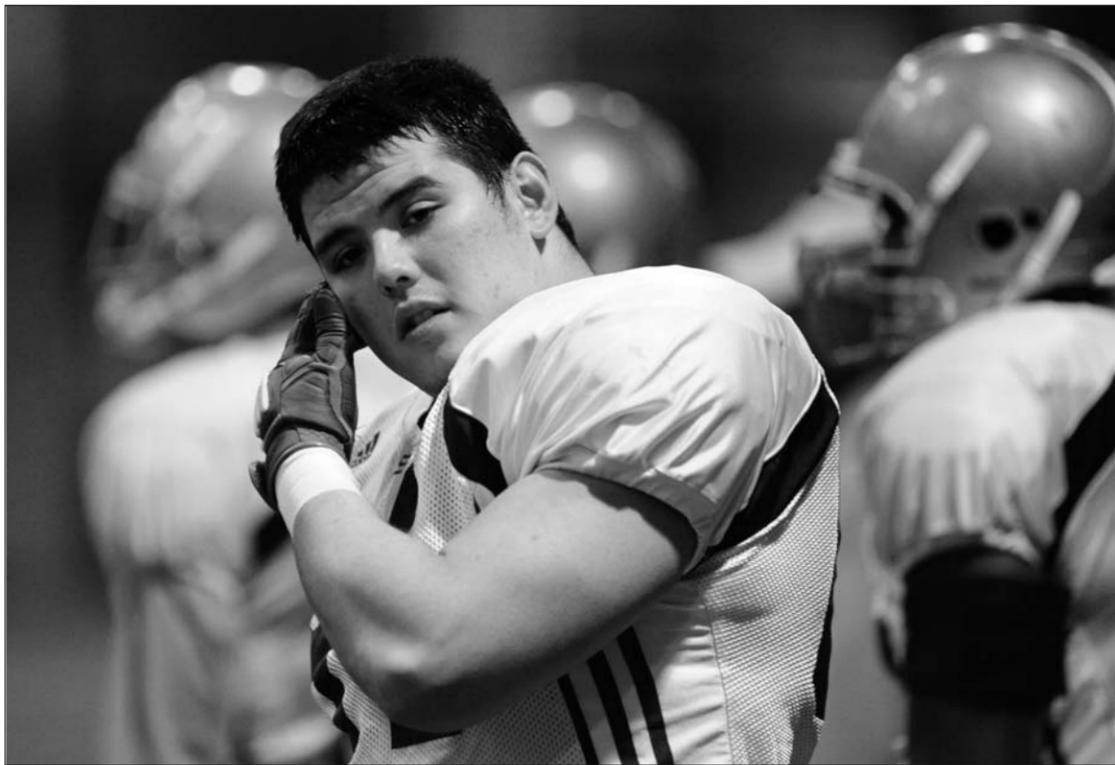
"My job is to make sure I make the guys out there better and prepare them for Saturday," Quintana said. "I may not play too much in the game on Saturday, but my games are Monday through Thursday out on the practice field. If you can't get pumped about that, then you must not love football."

The fifth-year senior said that the field is where he belongs, especially because of the brotherhood he has formed with the other walk-ons.

"Later on down the road, I am going to remember the relationships that I have formed with all of these guys out here," he said. "All of us walk-ons love the challenges we face and it's almost like it is a competition between us during practice."

Reinforcing one of Kelly's favorite mottos, Quintana also insists that he owes Notre Dame for what he has accomplished, not the other way around.

"I have grown so much since



Observer File Photo

Senior Martin Quintana switched from defensive end to outside linebacker in his fifth year with Notre Dame, as new Irish coach Brian Kelly installed a 3-4 defensive scheme.

coming here," he said. "Playing here is about doing things the right way and conducting yourself in the right manner, all for Notre Dame, our mother."

Quintana said he would graduate with values that will help him in the future.

"Because of everything that I have been through, there is

nothing that someone can put me through that I haven't experienced before," Quintana said. "The values that I developed here are what I will carry with me for the rest of my life."

With his bright future coming fast, Quintana had only one thing to say. "I love this university, but it's

time for me to move on to other things," he said.

Those other things will result in a gold-plated name on his desk, four years after first seeing his name scribbled onto tape stuck to a gold helmet.

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DAN WENGER

With another year possible, Wenger not done yet

By ERIC PRISTER
Associate Sports Editor

Fifth-year offensive lineman Dan Wenger has dealt with position changes, coaching changes and battled injuries throughout his time at Notre Dame. Through it all, Wenger said he felt that he had something to prove, and is confident that he was able to accomplish that goal.

"It's just one of those things where you're looking for the real end goal — to be successful every year and to keep getting better and hopefully play at the next level," Wenger said.

"In life, in football, in school or really in any aspect there's always going to be something that comes up and brings you down to your knees, and then the question is are you going to get up or are you going to sit there and lay down and not do anything about it?"

"And I just kept fighting and getting up and was stronger for it and bounced back and proved myself as one of the toughest and smartest and most reliable players that have come through this program."

Wenger's 19 starts places him third among active offensive players in that category. He attributes part of his success to

the teaching he received in his first few years on the team.

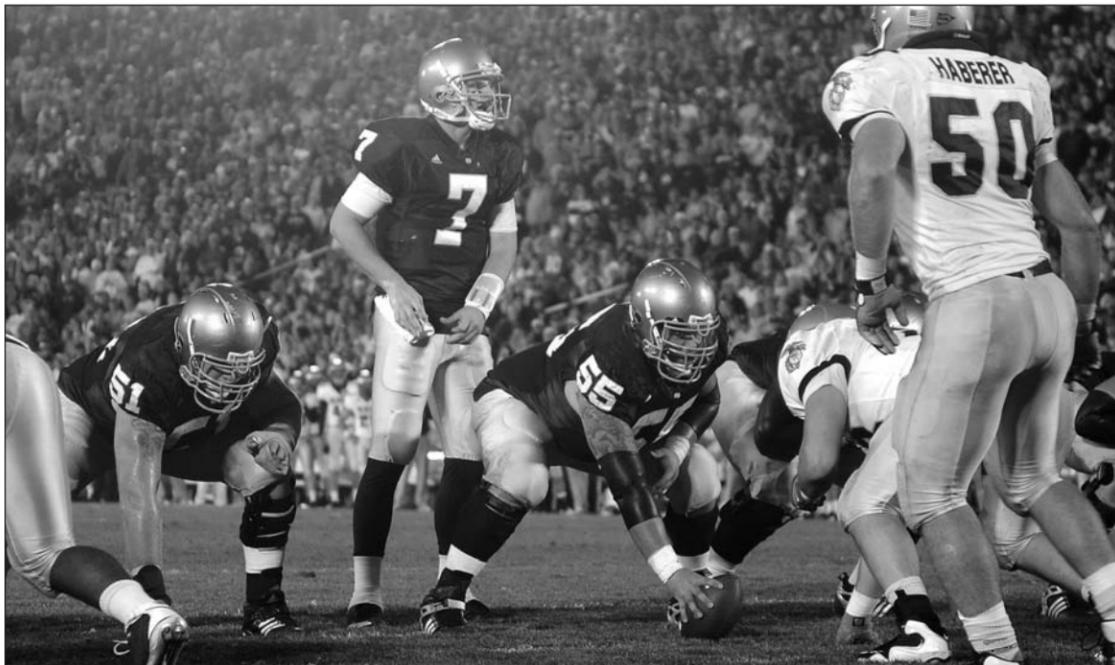
"I would just say that my first offensive line coach, John Latina, recruited me from the start and was really always in my corner for everything," he said. "He molded me and shaped me and taught me football like I never knew it was

supposed to be played. He showed me what the game's really about and transitioned me from a good high school player to a real college player who really understood the game and gave me a grasp on what we're trying to do. Not only coach Latina, but also [former Irish

center] John Sullivan reached out to me a lot, and luckily I had two years with John. Those two definitely helped me and worked with me and made me football smart."

Wenger's most successful season was his junior year. He started every game for the Irish at center in 2008, a team that finished 7-6 after their Hawaii Bowl victory.

"[Being a starter is] obviously one of the greatest feelings in the world," he said. "I started at center, and all the calls were on me. I had control of the line, and that's what I really live and die for in playing this game, because I have control, I'm the anchor of the line. That was the



COLEMAN COLLINS/The Observer

Senior center Dan Wenger, pictured at guard, 51, has switched positions along the offensive line throughout his career at Notre Dame, filling in wherever was needed to help the Irish.

greatest feeling of it all, just knowing that the other four guys could trust me and knew that I was going to get my job done and had faith and confidence in me. That's the best feeling, being able to give your all on every snap of every play of every game, and being that reliable to a team. It's something special that you don't find very often with many players."

Wenger played center in high school, but has been moved back and forth between center and guard, a process that he said he believes has taught him to adapt.

"It gave me the ability to just

be able to adapt in pretty much a split second, because with my position changes and coaching changes, there was a lot of back-and-forth," he said. "So it's just a matter of being able to be coached in certain situations at certain positions and roll with the punches. You've got a situation that's out of your hand, out of your control, and you have to make the best of it."

Despite the many setbacks, Wenger said he would not change a thing about his time at Notre Dame, which, he hinted, might not be quite done.

"It's been great," he said. "I

couldn't change one thing about it. I met great guys, great people, great coaches. I got a great education, and this place is something special. Whoever gets the opportunity to come through here, not only going to school but if you're given the blessing of playing here, you really have to treasure it. It took me a while to really understand that and really realize where I was. You can't take it for granted at all. But don't rule me out. I might be back next year."

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NICK LEZYNSKI

WOPU Nation president relishes chances to lead

By MATTHEW DeFRANKS
Sports Writer

For some kids, it's a dream to one day play football for Notre Dame. For senior walk-on cornerback Nick Lezynski, it was much more than that.

"I would come home in first grade with a 100 on my spelling test and I would ask my mom 'Is this good enough to get into Notre Dame? Will I be able to play football there?'" Lezynski said.

The Newton, Pa., native hails from a family draped in Notre Dame tradition. Lezynski's parents, sister and uncles all attended Notre Dame. He even attended Notre Dame High School in his hometown.

An Irish fan growing up, Lezynski walked on during the spring of his freshman year and now is part of the very select WOPU Nation — the Walk-On Players Union, described as a brotherhood between the walk-ons.

"We have parties. We have formals. We have e-mail chains. We have video skits," Lezynski said. "Basically, we rip on each other the whole time."

Members of the WOPU Nation don't take themselves too serious, either.

"I'm the president and they're thinking about impeachment," Lezynski said. "It's not going to happen. It's turned into a bit of a dictator-

ship."

The leader of the WOPU Nation off the field, Lezynski got onto the field this season for a play in the fourth quarter of Notre Dame's 23-16 win over Pittsburgh.

"The guy in front of me gets hurt and I find myself running onto the field in a six-point game, in the fourth quarter, playing kickoff return, which is easily the hardest thing to do in a game. It's like running into a train wreck," Lezynski said.

"It was refreshing to have some of the walk-ons get some playing time this year. I was fortunate enough to have played in a legitimately tight game."

The converted quarterback — who, at 5-foot-9, calls himself a shade under six feet tall — also made the travel roster and has traveled to each game this year.

"I went from being the little puny quarterback to senior year, going on kickoff return and traveling with the team," Lezynski said. "That whole route, I've had people supporting me and I appreciate the work ethic my parents instilled in me."

Lezynski mentioned fellow senior walk-ons Michael Garcia, Dan Franco, Martin Quintana and Chris Gurries as among those who have supported him throughout this process.

"The bottom line is that we want Notre Dame football to



MACKENZIE SAIN/The Observer

Senior walk-on cornerback Nick Lezynski, 42, has led Notre Dame's coalition of walk-on players, Walk-On Player Union, as its president over the past year.

win," Lezynski said. "These past few years have been tough knowing that, being a player, I can influence the outcome. It's been frustrating. I owe a lot to the previous coaching staff and this coaching staff for giving me a shot."

Lezynski, a marketing major, envisions the WOPU Nation bonds to continue for the rest of his life, including in a possible business venture.

"Maybe a couple of the

WOPU Nation guys and I will go into an entrepreneurship," Lezynski said. "Maybe start a business, make some money and start a scholarship fund for the future WOPU Nation guys."

While the business world is an option, Lezynski does not rule out a coaching career. Even without a coaching career, he believes football has prepared him for whatever challenge awaits him.

"There's so many skills, not

just physically, but mentally also," Lezynski said. "Now that I've accomplished this goal, I feel like anything in the future, I'll be able to tackle."

"Even though we have these down seasons and personally, I'm not a star, I wouldn't trade this for anything. There's nothing like being a Notre Dame football player."

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CHRIS SKUBIS

Lineman spends time with linemates on, off field

By SAM GANS
Sports Writer

Rarely is a man who is six-foot-two and weighs in at 232 pounds considered small.

One of the few exceptions is when he is a defensive end for

Notre Dame.

While the thought of facing men nearly 100 pounds bigger might intimidate some people, Christopher Skubis relishes the opportunity of going up against Notre Dame's offensive line every day in practice.

"It was a tough adjustment at

first going against offensive tackles who are 310 [pounds] or 320," Skubis said. "It was a challenge every day to come out here, but I've been getting better and I've had a blast doing it. It's nice to get in there and try to throw my weight around a little bit."

Skubis, a walk-on, came to Notre Dame as a typical student. He did not play for the team as a freshman, and didn't try out until his sophomore year, after a season of interhall football, when he felt the urge to attempt something bigger and better.

"My freshman year, I played interhall, but something was missing," he said. "It wasn't as competitive as I had hoped. I loved interhall, but I thought I could do something more."

While he has to fight on the field now to make up for his size disadvantage, he had to battle even harder just to make the team. Tryouts took place in the spring and were an agonizing process, filled with many demanding workouts.

"It was a brutal process back under [former Irish] coach [Charlie] Weis," he said. "They

really beat the crap out of us, and they had us in here five days a week at five in the morning. They worked us to the bone."

Skubis stuck it out, though, and became one of about 10 players out of the 50 from his class who tried out to make the squad. Though he was a walk-on, the scholarship players instantly embraced him as a member of the team.

"All those guys took me under their wing," he said. "They showed me what was expected and taught me the plays."

Not only were the other defensive linemen helpful to him on the field, but he became friends with them off the field, as well.

"I never thought I'd be running around with [senior nose guard] Ian Williams and [junior defensive ends] Ethan [Johnson] and K a p r o n [L e w i s -

Moore], and we've actually become really great friends," he said. "Last spring break, I was down in Florida with those guys. It's just opened a lot of doors for me, and I've met a lot of great people that I probably wouldn't have had a chance to."

Though Skubis has not made

a huge impact for the Irish on the field, he and the rest of the senior walk-ons have helped to make their own large contribution to the program, through the Walk-On Players Union (WOPU), a group that unites all the walk-ons and brings them closer.

"WOPU has grown in strength," he said. "Back in the day, no one really heard of it and part of our senior class goal was to get the word out there and make it one of those powerful groups on campus. It's on the rise. We already got a hold of those new guys, teaching them our ways, showing them what's expected, and they're going to keep the tradition going."

A double major in accounting and economics, Skubis plans to head south to Atlanta after graduation to work in auditing — and to escape the cold.

"I'm from Buffalo, and then coming to South Bend, I've gotten my fair share of snow," he said. "So I figure I'll go down there with nice, warm weather and enjoy the heat for a while down in SEC country and represent Notre Dame."

But before he does that, there is still some more football to be played and memories to reflect on.

"I've gotten to experience so much by running out of that tunnel and being out there on the field for warm-ups," he said. "It's just incredible, and I wouldn't trade it for anything."

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Courtesy of Lighthouse Imaging

Senior walk-on defensive end Chris Skubis began his Notre Dame career playing interhall football.

JOHN BELCHER

Wyoming walk-on excels most with track team

By MATTHEW DeFRANKS
Sports Writer

What do you get when you combine a one pound burger, some jalapeño sauce and a Notre Dame lineman? That would be the Man Challenge, presented by senior walk-on long snapper and defensive lineman John Belcher.

"It's pretty fun but one of my roommates, he's a little guy at about 160 pounds, he can eat," Belcher said. "But we keep it a tight race."

The 5-11, 235 pound native of Cheyenne, Wyo., makes more than just monstrous burgers in his spare time.

"I'm a huge fan of grilling stuff. I love making chicken, steak, pork, fish," Belcher said. "I love to eat. So anything that sounds good, I'll try to make it sometime."

A new addition to the team this year, Belcher's talents have been simmering on the track and field team, where he competes in both the shot put and hammer throw. The Irish men's track team has won four of the past six Big East titles in both indoor and outdoor track.

"For track, [my goal is] to win two more Big East championships," Belcher said. "I know our throwing squad is a good one. This year should be fun. I'm excited."

Belcher, an All-Big East selection as a thrower, has the

unique situation of balancing track and football.

"Whenever football ends, I'll be able to go back to track. Right now, my commitment is to football and when it's over, I'll be back to track."

In May's Big East championships, Belcher placed third and fourth in the shot put and hammer throw events, respectively. Belcher wants the rust to come off easily after not throwing for a while.

"Hopefully, I'll be able to get back in the groove pretty quickly," he said.

As a rare varsity athlete to walk onto the football team, Belcher had always wanted to play for the Irish.

"This was a great opportunity. I'm happy I did it, I'm happy I made it on the team," Belcher said. "In my senior year of high school, I thought my football career was over. It's nice to be able to play again."

Belcher's highlight of the year came in the Irish's first game when he got to run out of the tunnel at Notre Dame Stadium.

"Running out of the tunnel is a really cool experience," Belcher said. "It's the first time I've run out to see 80,000 people from the field."

Notre Dame's great academics, athletics and overall atmosphere drew Belcher to Notre Dame out of high school, as did its with its proximity — or lack thereof — to his home



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

Senior walk-on long snapper John Belcher has taken his role with the Irish seriously, while enjoying hijinx off the field, including an eating contest he called "the Man Challenge."

in Wyoming. But those factors did not have the greatest influence on him during his three-plus years.

"I could name off coaches. I could name off friends. I could name off teachers. But it's really been the Notre Dame community that has had a huge impact on me," Belcher

said.

As a pre-med student who has opted to not attend medical school, Belcher would like to work in medical device sales for a company like Stryker or Johnson & Johnson. An ideal situation would be in the operating room with surgeons instructing them on how to use

the instruments, he said.

"I was very fortunate to have this opportunity and lucky to be on this team," Belcher said. "I can't believe I'm already senior. I've just really enjoyed my time here."

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ANDREW NUSS

Nuss switches sides of ball early in ND career

By CHRIS ALLEN
Sports Writer

When offensive lineman Andrew Nuss first stepped onto the field of Notre Dame Stadium during his freshman year, he envisioned some of his greatest moments in an Irish uniform happening when he chased after opposing quarterbacks.

Little did he know then that his career would center around protecting quarterbacks on the other side of the ball.

Before the change could be made, the six-foot-five senior from Virginia had to experience a moment of self-realization.

"My freshman summer, when I got here in training camp I was on the defensive side of the ball," Nuss said. "It was a lot of fun, but I realized I'm not really athletic. I realized I should try offense instead."

Long before he considered his prospects on the offensive line, Nuss was a four-star recruit who started his college search looking for a school that could provide him with the perfect mix of academics and athletic accommodations. Though a dozen schools offered him spots, when Notre Dame came calling, he couldn't resist.

"I visited every school because I

wanted to give every school a fair chance," Nuss said. "When I was offered by Notre Dame, I was like, well, this is what every kid grows up wanting. When I visited in the summer, it was basically, 'I'm done, I've found everything I wanted.'"

When Nuss arrived on campus, the coaching staff, led by former Irish coach Charlie Weis and offensive line coach John Latina, convinced Nuss to switch to the

offensive line to help him best realize his potential.

"Coach Weis asked me what I wanted to be. I told him I wanted to be a playmaker. Turned out to be the opposite," Nuss said. "I made the switch after the Michigan game my freshman year. [Latina] who was the offensive line

coach back then basically told me that my future here at Notre Dame was on the offensive line. When I made the switch, a bunch of guys helped me out along the way, namely [former center] Eric Olsen and [offensive lineman] Dan Wenger. I loved it."

Eventually, Nuss worked his way into the rotation along the line, making his way into two games during the 2008 season and impacting special teams.

"Sophomore year was great," he said. "I got to play a little bit, got to play in the Navy game, and then obviously the Hawaii Bowl was a



JULIE HERDER/The Observer

Senior guard Andrew Nuss originally came to Notre Dame planning on chasing quarterbacks, but after switching sides of the ball, he spent his Irish career protecting them instead.

great trip."

With another year of practice under his belt, Nuss found himself playing a big role in the 2009 opener against Nevada, where he had one of his favorite moments of his career.

"There was a screen, and I was just running downfield as fast as I could. I thought I was running really fast, but I wasn't," Nuss said. "All of a sudden out of nowhere I saw a corner coming at me and I just cut him really bad and sprung Michael Floyd on a 40-yard play. After that I was so pumped, but I was extremely tired at the end of it."

Nuss played in 13 games in

2009, ranking sixth on the team in special teams appearances, seeing significant time as an offensive guard and flourishing under the coaching of new offensive line coach Frank Verducci. After the coaching change in the off-season, Nuss has maintained his role as a strong special-teams contributor while seeing duty along the offensive line.

As he approaches the end of his senior season, he said he believes attending Notre Dame was the right decision.

"It's definitely a lot harder than I thought it was going to be," Nuss said. "But overall, I think I would do it again if I could."

Once the football schedule comes to a close, Nuss plans to pursue a job in the financial industry, a path that began with a position change in the business school similar to the one he made on the field.

"All of my friends were doing marketing," he said. "I said, 'Oh, I don't want to do marketing, I want to be different.' I chose finance, and sometimes I regret being a finance major because it's so hard. I really do enjoy stocks and mutual bonds and all that stuff, though. I find it very interesting."

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BILL FLAVIN

Long snapper exceeds even his own expectations

By MEAGHAN VESELIK
Sports Writer

A well-rounded Notre Dame experience is all Bill Flavin wanted when he stepped on campus four years ago as a student, but as he moved his belongings into the fourth floor of Keough Hall, Flavin never expected he'd one day be the starting long snapper for the Irish.

It's a story that began his freshman year in the same dorm hallway where he still lives today, and one that ended two weeks ago when his ankle broke in the first quarter. Although it ended prematurely, Flavin said he'll never forget experiencing a walk-on's dream.

"I walked on in the spring of my freshman year," he said. "It's been a dream to come to Notre Dame since I was a little kid. My dad came here and I've been coming to football games my whole life. I didn't really think about [walking on] coming out of high school, I just thought I'd be done."

"But then [graduated Irish player] Mike Anello, he was a walk-on and was a junior when I was a freshman, and he was in Keough and lived in my section, and he said, 'Did you ever think about walking on?' And I said, 'Well, kind of, I mean I can long snap alright, so might as well try.'"

Another hallmate and friend,

Dan Brennan, also pushed Flavin to try out and seconded Anello's encouragement.

"I was on the fence but [Brennan] was like, 'just do it, you got nothing to lose. Even if you don't make it, you'll just be back here, where you are now,'" Flavin said. "So I took his advice to heart, and I gave it a shot and here I am now."

Some things Flavin didn't think about when he took that advice: early morning practices walking through snow, tough workouts that are expected to fit in around hours working in the summer, a strict weight training regimen, and the hours necessary to put in outside of class and a social life. But standing on the field and playing in front of thousands of cheering fans makes it all worth it for Flavin. Especially since he was not a recruit but rather a respected member of the WOPU Nation.

"The WOPU Nation is the Walk-On Players Union," he said. "It's just the group of walk-on players — like we have each other's backs all the time and we all went through the same things to make it. We're all dedicated people off the field and on the field. It's a really cool group of people to be a part of and they've been my best friends for three years."

Being part of the WOPU Nation and growing to have a leadership position on the team in his senior season has added to Flavin's experience. Working

up to the top is nothing new for him, however, as he has held leadership positions before. This time, he said the drive to lead came from his desire of once more achieving his own goals and to help Notre Dame do well.

"I've been a Notre Dame fan my entire life, and obviously, no one enjoys seeing Notre Dame lose or not play a complete game to teams that [it] should beat, so the overall desire is to help the team win and to get the team back to where it should be" he said. "I think the difference between a leadership role on the football team at Notre Dame to a role in student government or whatever else I've been involved in, is that with this, the group of people you're with, it's an incredibly motivated group. It doesn't take much to catalyze that effort. It's kind of leadership by example; working hard and doing things right every day, everybody gets caught along for the ride."

Flavin leads by example in the campus science labs as well, where he has been studying biochemistry in hopes of attending a MD/PhD program next fall to pursue a career that combines a love for research with patient care. Where he will end up is yet to be determined, but Flavin has submitted applications to schools such as Northwestern and Stanford.

How Flavin handles it all is something that would have been a mystery to even himself



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Senior walk-on short snapper Bill Flavin was part of an all-walk-on field goal unit before breaking his ankle against Tulsa.

when he stepped onto campus, but now, he wouldn't have preferred it any other way.

"Whenever I'm busier, I'm able to accomplish more. If you would have told me I'd be doing all the things I've been doing, I would have told you, when I first started, I would have said that's nuts, I wouldn't have been able to do it," he said.

"But I think I'm able to do more when I'm involved with more. It's cool to be able to go from a football practice at the Gug to a lab in Jordan or things like that. I think I've seen a broad piece of Notre Dame over the last four years and it's been great."

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MIKE RAGONE

Torn ACL helps tight end realize priorities in life

By MEGAN GOLDEN
Sports Writer

A torn ACL, a taste of Notre Dame academics and a coaching change were not going to stop senior tight end Mike Ragone from becoming the athlete, student and, most importantly, friend that he is today.

Ragone saw action in 11 games as a freshman, and he quickly learned the difference between his high school's game day atmosphere and the

crowd of 80,000 in Notre Dame Stadium.

"My freshmen year against Georgia Tech [was] the greatest game in the world," he said. "I come from a school with like 800 people, and the stands hold 1,000 to 2,000. It was mind blowing, crazy. I was nervous like a little girl."

During training camp of his sophomore year, Ragone tore his ACL and underwent season-ending surgery.

"Sophomore year I was ready to play, and I tore my ACL. I had to play through it in

training camp, and my knee couldn't take it anymore, so I had surgery and couldn't play that year," he said. "Just overall, it definitely sets you back. At the same time, it also developed me into the person I am today because I've worked so hard to just come back and come back."

With the injury, Ragone learned that there is more to life than football.

"You also have the school here, and it's not an easy school. So I had to work harder and harder, which really matured me in a lot of ways," he said. "Before, I would just be messing around and not taking anything seriously. I was just worried about football, and football's only a game. When I hurt my knee, I realized that there's a life out there. Just enjoy everything."

That means Ragone enjoys the academics, for what they are worth.

"It's so tough, but it's awesome. My advisors and mentors have really helped me, just standing over [me]," he said. "It really pays off in the

end because when [I] have a Notre Dame degree, I will be happy that I went through it. Having a degree at the end, plus football, I mean there's nothing really better than that."

The highlight of Ragone's athletic career came early in the Washington State game during his junior season. The Cougars blocked an Irish extra point and attempted to return the ball, until Ragone sprinted

95 yards and came out of nowhere to make the tackle.

"Washington State, I caught a guy from behind. It was a 95-yard run down the field," he said. "It was named the play of the game."

Prior to Ragone's senior year, one of the biggest reasons he had chosen Notre Dame — Irish coach Charlie Weis — was fired, and Notre Dame announced Brian Kelly's hiring as head coach.

"Weis was always there for me, and he recruited me. He's like a friend, someone who's always there, who's going to be at your wedding. It was tough. We all had the same goal, we all wanted to win."

"Before, I would just be messing around and not taking anything seriously. I was just worried about football, and football's only a game. When I hurt my knee, I realized that there's a life out there. Just enjoy everything."

Mike Ragone
senior tight end



SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

When senior tight end Mike Ragone tore his ACL his sophomore year, he was forced to notice the other chances Notre Dame offers.

And that's what it came down to. He's a great coach, competitor, and he's there to help you," he said. "At first I didn't know what to think. I wasn't mad or anything. Coach Kelly's won everywhere he's been."

Although his athletic career might have been rocky with the injury and coaching change, Ragone has made friendships and memories that he will cherish forever.

"So many friendships, like in high school, there are so many guys from my state who have come here. [Receiver] Duval Kamara, one of my best friends, [safety] Harrison Smith, [linebacker] Steve Baskorz," he said. "We've just bonded since day one. Hopefully it'll stay that way the rest of my life."

One particular memory stands out from his sophomore year.

"On Halloween Harrison and I went out after the game, and I dressed up as Scooby-Doo, and he was Shaggy. That was when he had the long hair," Ragone said. "No one thought that we'd pull it off, and they were the best costumes ever."

Ragone said he would never forget about his teammates, even after his career at Notre Dame.

"I want my teammates to know that I'll always have their back. No matter what, I'm going to keep riding with them 'til the day we die."

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DAN FRANCO

Notre Dame obvious choice for South Bend WR

By MIKE GOTIMER
Sports Writer

When senior wide receiver Dan Franco was looking at colleges, he knew he wanted to play football at the Division I level. But for the Granger, Ind., native, playing at Notre Dame was always the ultimate goal.

"I was looking at a lot of different kinds of schools," Franco said. "I had a lot of offers from smaller schools, Division III schools, but I also had it in my head that I wanted to go to a Division I school because I want to see what I'm capable of and how I can compare against the best. And even if I'm not the best, I want to know if I could compete with the best."

In his first season with the Irish, Franco turned in a fine play in practice that proved he could compete with some of the nation's elite talent when he beat former Irish defensive back Raeshon McNeil for a touchdown in one-on-one drills at practice.

"Raeshon McNeil was our top cover corner at the time, and he came up expecting David Grimes and instead I show up," Franco said. "I look over and I'm like 'I'm ready to go coach, what do you want?' and he looks at him, looks at me and says '[expletive] him, go run a go route.' So I get to the line, [Irish quarterback] Dayne [Crist] throws the ball, throws it deep, 40-yard touchdown pass. I caught it right at the end. The entire offense swarmed me."

A graduate of South Bend's Clay High School, Franco and his friends dreamed of one day suiting up for the Irish at Notre Dame Stadium while growing up in Michiana. He also has family ties to the school, as his mother graduated from the University with an engineering degree and his father is a psychologist on staff.

"I've been raised on Notre Dame ever since I was young," Franco said. "Me and all my friends had dreamt about putting on a gold helmet and the opportunity was

there. I've really been working my entire life for this opportunity, and I've been fortunate enough to be a part of it."

Franco walked on for the Irish in the winter of 2008 after transferring from Indiana University South Bend, and he hasn't looked back since making the cut under former Irish coach Charlie Weis.

"I never doubted my decision," Franco said. "I knew from when I was younger if I could get myself an opportunity to go to Notre Dame and actually walk on the team that I was [going to] do everything I could."

Since arriving on campus, Franco has become close with his fellow walk-ons, and he says that he'll miss spending time with his fellow WOPU Nation colleagues once their playing days are over.

"We have a thing called WOPU Nation, which is what the walk-ons call ourselves —

the Walk-On Players Union," Franco said. "These are the guys who when we first walked on, we're waking up at like 4:15 in the morning, going through this process five days a week. It was hell, and it was painful, and it was only for guys that really, really wanted it."

Franco, a psychology major, plans to graduate after this semester and will look to continue his studies in graduate school and work for a Ph.D. in psychology. He's mainly focused on social psychology and ultimately hopes to get into sports psychology.

"It's really something I've been interested in since I was like 10 years old, and I'm planning on going to grad school," Franco said. "I'm hoping to get into a Ph.D. program after the semester. It's always been a passion of mine."

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South Bend native and wide receiver Dan Franco never wavered in his decision to go to Notre Dame.

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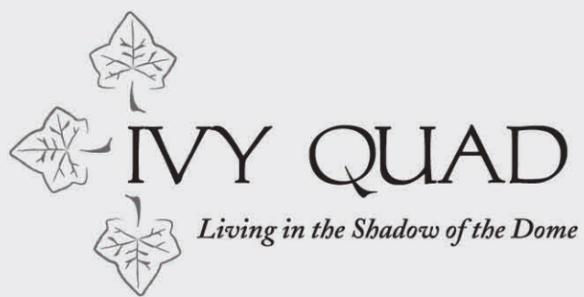
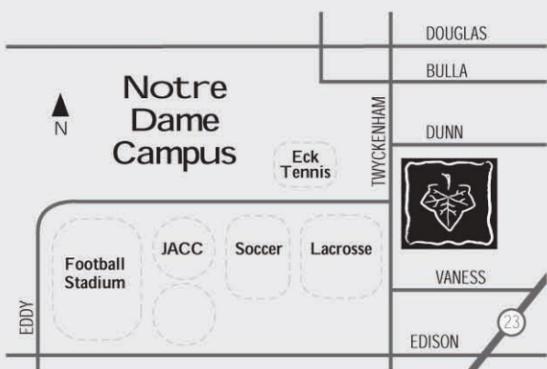
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TAYLOR DEVER

Competition brings three-year back-up to starter

By SAM GANS
Sports Writer

There is an old saying that competition brings out the best in people.

Senior offensive tackle Taylor Dever might be the embodiment of that claim.

After backing up former Irish right tackle Sam Young for three years, Dever began spring practice in a competition for 2010 graduate Young's vacated spot. Following a tough battle with fellow senior tackle Andrew Nuss, Dever emerged from fall camp as the starter.

The competition not only was a challenge that made the 6-foot-5-inch, 297-pound Dever better, but was an enjoyable experience for him, as well.

"The competition was good," Dever said. "I was at right tackle with Andrew. He's a great football player. Competition is what football is. It's so much fun. It makes playing the game worth it. It makes coming to work every day worth it."

Since that time, Dever has cemented his position as the starter when healthy, playing an important role in all of the Irish's contests in which he's been available. One game in particular that he noticed his play really come together was Sept. 18 in East Lansing.

"One of my best games was

probably at Michigan State," Dever said. "When we played up there, I just had a good game, as far as assignments and execution goes."

On the field is just one area in which Dever has enjoyed Notre Dame. Off the field he has also contributed to his love for the University.

"There's definitely a drive and a focus everywhere you go in the classrooms and in the dorms," Dever said. "There are good people here. They like to have fun and they also like to work hard. That's something I told myself that I was looking for in college when I was trying to figure out where to go. Away from football here, it's been a lot of fun."

Dever has thought about his future, but has not made any definitive plans at this point. As he did not play in his freshman year, Dever has a fifth year of eligibility remaining, and is likely to use it. He plans to graduate with a degree in marketing, but is unsure of exactly what type of career he'd like to pursue after his playing days and education at Notre Dame are over. Of course, there's one that is a possibility: the NFL.

"If that opportunity presents itself and it works out, I'll go into it with the mindset that I'm going to do the best I can and make everything work to the best of my ability," Dever said. "There are some things



TOM LA/The Observer

In his first season as a starter, offensive tackle Taylor Dever, 75, protected Irish quarterbacks Dayne Crist, pictured, 10, Tommy Rees and Nate Montana.

that are out of your control, but I do feel that's an opportunity I have and I'll take it head on."

But to his fans, Dever's football experience, social life, education and future career fall well short in importance when matched up with this question: What's up with the long, luscious locks of hair?

"I am from California and people often give me grief because of that and I just

decided to start growing it out," he said. "It's been two years. In 2008, right before the Hawaii Bowl at the end of the season, was when I decided (to grow it out) and just kind of stuck with it since."

While Dever's hair length may be all in fun, results on the football field aren't as much of a laughing matter.

"Obviously playing football at Notre Dame, there's always going to be the eyes (watch-

ing), the pressures and expectations," he said. "This is my senior year and I've been here for four years now and I've been through a lot of ups and downs. I've had experiences that are good and bad. But we've always continued to fight, which I think is something you've got to do in football and in life."

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STEVE PASKORZ

Torn ACL leaves Paskorz on sideline for senior year

By MICHAEL TODISCO
Sports Writer

Notre Dame football is defined by tradition — the gleaming golden helmets of the Fighting Irish carry with them decades of pride and success. For senior linebacker Steve Paskorz, this is what lured him to the University.

"The name and tradition that comes along with playing for

Notre Dame is outstanding," Paskorz said.

Paskorz entered Notre Dame as a highly touted prospect, in a group with the likes of Jimmy Clausen and Golden Tate, and he said he looks back fondly on the relationships formed with his fellow recruits.

"Not only were those guys leaders on the field but they were great people off the field, and I was real good friends with

both of them," he said. "I enjoyed talking to them when they came through here [during their bye week] for games this year and catching up and having fun with them."

A highlight of Paskorz's career came during his sophomore year, in which he established himself as a strong special teams player.

"I would say the defining moment was the Hawaii Bowl," he said. "We really had fun, plus it was a unique experience to get out there and see Hawaii."

Paskorz continued playing special teams during his junior season, and seemed prime to take on a bigger role as a senior under the new coaching regime. However, after tearing his ACL, Paskorz has spent his senior season on the sideline, which was aggravating for the Allison Park, Pa. native.

"It's been really frustrating only being able to watch my senior season," he said. "Possibly the last time I have the chance to go out on the field might slip away without even having a chance to play; it's kind of depressing."

Once he realized that he

wouldn't have an impact on the field for this season, Paskorz said he decided to try to make a positive impact on the team in other ways. Paskorz has tried to take the underclassmen under his wing and share his experiences with them.

"I stay around and talk to the younger guys and try to help them out, and mentor them, with what I know and what I've been through," Paskorz said. "I

do what I can off the field to help the guys on the field."

Paskorz said he has met influential people at Notre Dame who helped shape his football career. While he stressed that he enjoyed learning from the coaching staff, especially strength coach Paul Luongo, Paskorz's time at Notre Dame afforded him the opportunity to work with a legend: Former Notre Dame standout and a member of the Super Bowl I champion Green Bay Packers team Red Mack has taken an interest in Paskorz.

"Red Mack actually graduated from my high school, and when he comes to a game or attends practices he always gives me advice," Paskorz said. "He lets me know what I'm doing wrong,

but he also just talks to me and tells me his story which is really interesting."

Paskorz has embraced the coaching change from Charlie Weis to Brian Kelly. He laments his injury that precluded him from fully competing under and learning from the new coach.

"When I was still good I had the opportunity to play but it was just a shame that I got hurt," Paskorz said. "I really enjoy his coaching style and the type of coach that he is."

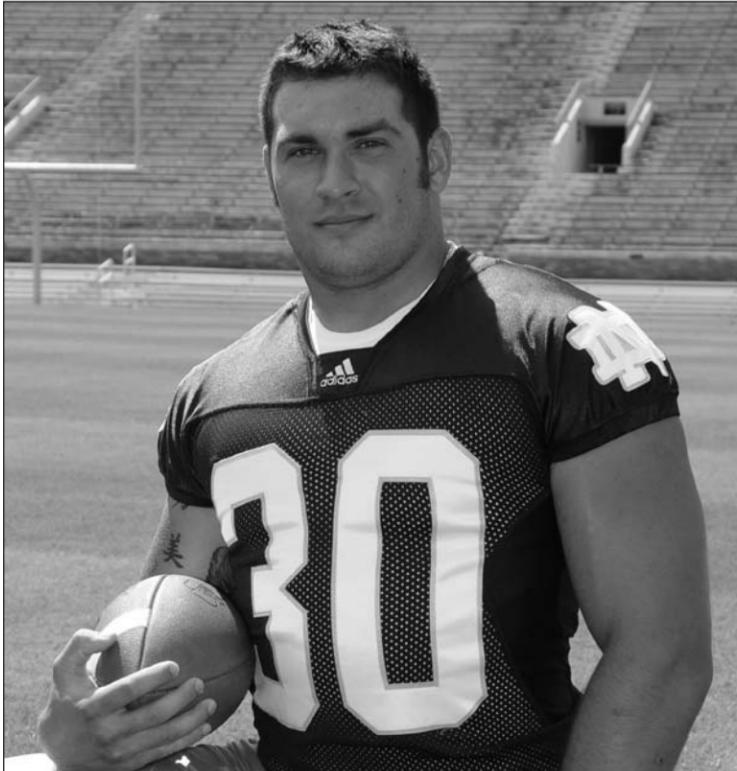
But Paskorz hopes that he may have one more year left under Coach Kelly. Since he did not play in his freshman season and was injured for his senior year, Paskorz still has NCAA eligibility. If things don't work out playing football though, Paskorz said he may take some time to enjoy his other passion.

"Hopefully I can come back and play for a fifth year," he said. "If I don't get a fifth year then take some time off. I'm a big outdoorsman, and I'd love to travel and go hunting and fishing, just relax a bit."

Whatever the future holds for Paskorz, he will always remember the unique experience of being a Notre Dame football player.

"When people come up and talk to you and ask, 'You look like you play football player, where do you play?' Being able to say that I play at the University of Notre Dame is truly special."

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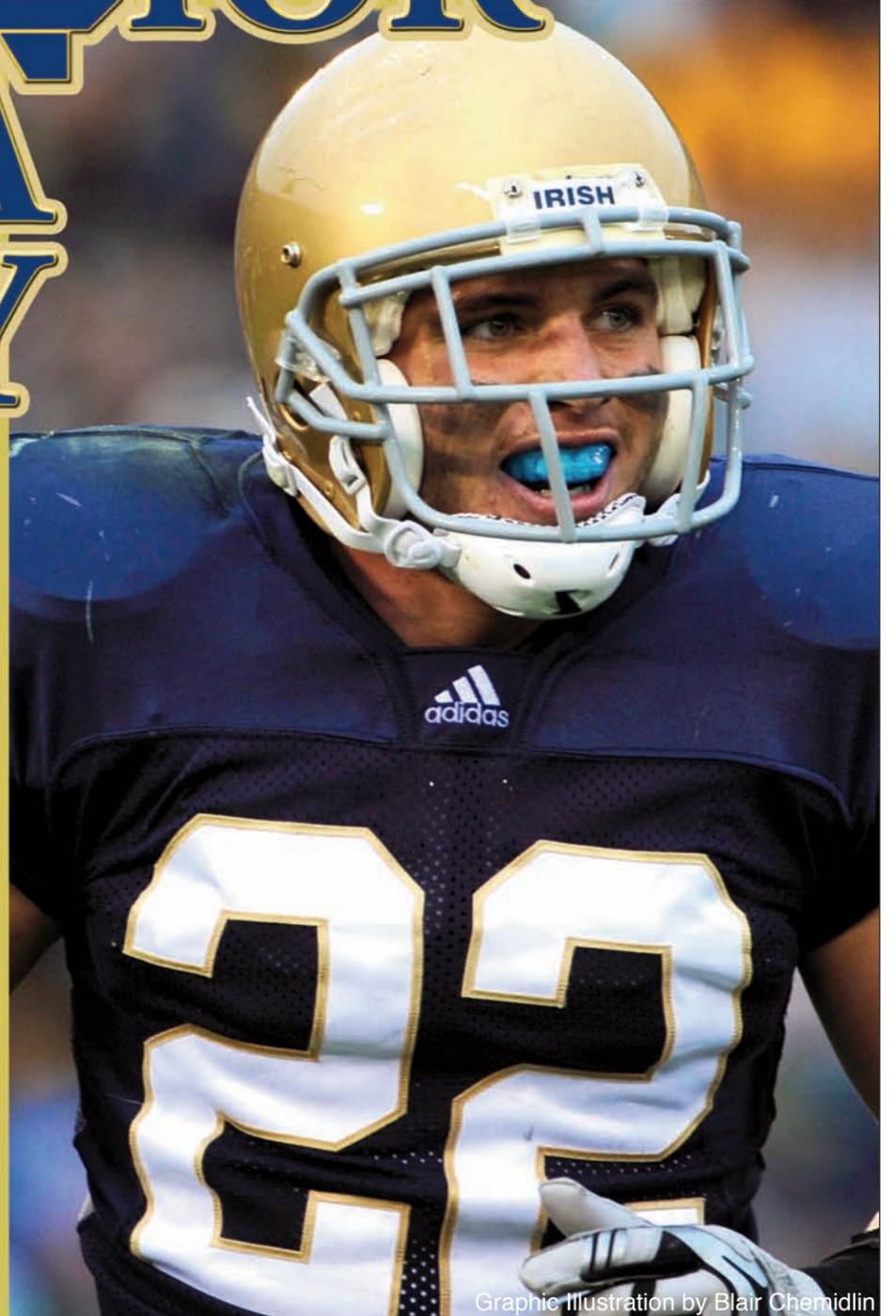


Courtesy of Lighthouse Imaging

Senior linebacker Steve Paskorz may come back for one more season with the Irish after tearing his ACL this season.



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IRISH INSIDER

Friday, November 12, 2010

INTERHALL — THE OBSERVER

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**Top seeds Dillon and Sorin square off
for ultimate supremacy**

Season's front-runners meet for title shot

By MATT DEFRANKS

Sports Writer

A year after the bottom two seeds battled for the men's interhall football championship, No. 1 Dillon will take on No. 2 Sorin in Notre Dame Stadium as heavyweights meet with the title on the line.

Almost mirror images of each other, both Dillon (6-0) and Sorin (5-1) won the closest games of their respective seasons last week in the semifinals. Dillon came from behind to drop two-time defending champion Siegfried while Sorin capitalized on a failed two-point conversion to triumph over Alumni.

Not only was it the closest game of the season, but also the lowest scoring output of the year for the Big Red, who turned the ball over twice in a game the first time all year.

"We're not worried [about last game], our offense clicked," Dillon senior captain Jordan Smith said. "We had a lot of penalties and two turnovers."

On offense, the Big Red feature freshman quarterback Kevin Fink and sophomore wide receiver Will Salvi as part of an aerial attack that propelled Dillon all

season.

"They are great players, always the first ones to practice working on routes," Smith said. "[Fink's] accuracy is great and [Salvi] runs the best routes I've seen and he gets the ball at the highest point."

On the ground, sophomore running back Terry Howard — coming off a 122-yard performance against Siegfried — leads the charge.

"He always runs hard, the first guy can never bring him down," Smith said. "The success on the ground is because of the great play by the offensive line. They come off the ball really well."

While the offense averages nearly 20 points per game, the Dillon defense is also solid. Last week's lone touchdown by Siegfried were the first points given up by the Big Red defense since Oct. 10 against Stanford.

"Our defense is underrated. We've given up four touchdowns all year," Smith said.

The Big Red will have their hands full with a Sorin offense averaging over 16 points a game during their five-game winning streak.

"I've watched a few Sorin

games and they have some play-makers on offense," Smith said.

Senior running back and captain Michael Browder, along with junior fullback Matthew Pepe, sophomore quarterback Ted Spinelli and sophomore wide receiver Ryan Robinson, lead the Otters' attack.

"[Robinson] has been great all year, he's quite the player," Browder said. "Although I think he's slightly overhyped."

Before being cooled off by Alumni last week, the Sorin offense had been on fire, racking up 60 points over their previous three games.

"We're not particularly worried about our performance last game," Browder said. "We have a game plan ready for this week."

After managing only 25 totals yards in the second half last week, Sorin now faces a defense that has not given up more than eight points in a single game this year while holding two teams scoreless.

The Otters' defense, having also recorded two shutouts this year, held Alumni to six points — and even that was surprising.

The Dawg touchdown was the first one scored on the Sorin defense since Sept. 26 against Fisher. The Sorin defense also features nine of their offensive starters, making their dominance even more impressive.

Electrifying offenses and stingy defenses, however, aren't the only similarities with these two squads. Both teams struggled



MACKENZIE SAIN/The Observer
Dillon freshman quarterback Kevin Fink looks for a receiver in the Big Red's 12-7 semifinal victory over Siegfried Sunday.

early, hit their strides midseason, and played in semifinal thrillers last week. Both teams have young quarterbacks with young go-to receivers. Both teams have defenses that are averaging less than five points allowed per game. Both teams will be playing

in Notre Dame Stadium Sunday. But only one will be crowned champion.

The Otters and the Big Red square off at 1 p.m.

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Three Robinson siblings make Stadium a family affair

By SAM GANS

Sports Writer

When sitting down with Kaitlin, Ryan and Clare Robinson, three siblings all vying for an interhall championship, the must-win nature they share is evident from the very first question.

When asked how serious they were as kids playing neighbor-

hood games, all three Robinsons echoed two words simultaneously, as if rehearsed: "very competitive."

That drive has carried on to their time at Notre Dame, as all three will be playing in the interhall championships in Notre Dame Stadium this Sunday. Kaitlin and Clare will be battling for No. 1 Howard against No. 2 Pasquerilla West and Ryan will be

fighting for 5-1 No. 2 Sorin against No. 1 Dillon. They have all played key roles and numerous positions, filling any spot necessary in the pursuit of victories.

Clare, a freshman, has played safety, and even moved to the offensive line last game. Kaitlin, a senior, plays several positions, but primarily lines up at wide receiver and linebacker. Ryan, a sophomore, plays wide receiver, tight end, defensive end and linebacker. "We pretty much go wherever the team needs us," Kaitlin said.

Each sibling made key plays in the semifinals. Against Pangborn, Kaitlin was the spy on the Phoxes' playmaker, Gabby Tate, limiting her impact, and Clare had an important sack on a fourth-and-goal, helping lead a Duck (6-0) romp. Ryan had a catch for Sorin's only touchdown in the Otters' 7-6 win over Alumni.

Because of those efforts, they're all playing in the Stadium Sunday.

The Robinsons' passion for athletics did not begin at Notre Dame. Rather, it started in a backyard.

"We're really close in age, so we had a lot of overlapped friend groups playing backyard sports," Ryan said. "Touch football got pretty intense."

One sport, in particular, was heated, especially as they grew in

age. "We played driveway basketball until we just got too old and too physical for that," Kaitlin said. "Then it got banned."

The memories of the intensity of those games stay with the Robinsons, though, in the form of physical reminders.

"Ryan has scars and I have chipped teeth," Kaitlin said.

But don't ask them any specific tales — what happens in the backyard stays in the backyard.

"[There are no stories] that we can say," Ryan said. "That's deep, dark family secrets."

The Robinsons are a true Notre Dame family. The three currently enrolled have a younger sister, Molly, a high school student who hopes to attend Notre Dame. They also have a little brother, Jack, a second grader who is a big Irish fan. The family love for Notre Dame was spurred in large part by their father, who attended the University.

"We grew up with Notre Dame," Kaitlin said. "Some people got sung lullabies, and we got sung the Notre Dame fight song."

Family members will be watching the games in Notre Dame Stadium this weekend.

"We've got a big family in Chicago and a lot of them are coming for the games," Kaitlin

said. As for the matchups themselves, Ryan is respectful of Dillon, but confident.

"They have a pretty good team, but we do, too," he said. "It should be a good game."

The women's side is not as friendly, after a bitter championship game last year between Howard and Pasquerilla West, which Howard won.

"There's animosity," Clare said. "It'll be pretty physical."

Kaitlin added: "There are some personal stories between Howard and PW. They are a good team, but we're just excited to go back to the Stadium and win again."

Ultimately, Sunday's games will be a contest not just against the opponent, but against each other.

"I think it's still a competition," Clare said. "If he wins and we don't, then we're number two."

In the end, Kaitlin and Clare wish no ill will towards their brother.

"We still want Sorin to win," Kaitlin said.

Ryan doesn't share those feelings.

"I don't really care [how they do] as long as we win," he said.

Typical siblings.

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MACKENZIE SAIN/The Observer
Sorin sophomore wide receiver Ryan Robinson catches the only touchdown of the Otters' 7-6 win over Alumni Sunday.



Allan Joseph

Interhall Editor

Dillon and Sorin have been the clear front-runners all season long, so it doesn't surprise me that they're meeting this weekend in the Stadium with the big shiny trophy on the line. It's really difficult to pick between these two teams. Terry Howard has been fantastic on the ground for Dillon, while Ted Spinelli has led a high-flying Otter attack. Both squads field stout defenses as well.

The outcome will probably come down to a crucial break for one team, and Sorin's reliance on the aerial attack could come back to haunt them if an errant pass turns into a turnover. As last year's championship showed, the Stadium game is usually won on the ground, and I think the Big Red edge Sorin in a championship game for the ages.

FINAL SCORE: Dillon 20, Sorin 17



Chris Allen

Interhall Editor

If there's one thing I've learned about interhall football in the two years I've been involved with it, it is that the men's game is usually decided by big plays. The defenses usually are able to keep offenses from putting together sustained drives, and the lack of a kicking game means teams usually find themselves playing for a touchdown. This will be a huge factor in this game, as both teams have big-play passing games.

Kevin Fink and Ted Spinelli have been running these offenses all season, and they'll get a chance to face off against each other on Sunday. The game will almost certainly come down to one big pass play on either side. I think the combination of Spinelli to the vertical receiving threat Ryan Robinson will be enough to give Sorin the victory, but Fink and Dillon won't make it easy.

FINAL SCORE: Sorin 13, Dillon 7

Purple Weasels, Ducks fight for title again

By JACK HEFFERON
Sports Writer

Two teams with a history will meet again Sunday when No. 1 Howard takes on No. 2 Pasquerilla West in Notre Dame Stadium with another interhall championship on the line.

In last year's championship game, the Ducks (6-0) were able to outlast the Purple Weasels (6-0) 13-7 in a tension-filled contest. Howard grabbed a first-half 13-0 lead, and was able to hold the explosive Purple Weasel offense to just one touchdown the rest of the way. Howard senior captain and quarterback Kayla Bishop remembers it well.

"It was very close and really hard fought on both sides. Our defense helped us hold on in the second half, and we were able to win the game," Bishop said.

Pasquerilla West senior captain Libby Koerbel, on the other hand, said she hopes to learn from what went wrong last year.

"We came out super hyped up. We were really confident, and expected to score right away," Koerbel said. "That didn't happen, and we got really down. It was hard to come back after that."

This year, the Ducks are undefeated once again, and once again hold the top seed after dominating Blue League play. In fact, Howard has won 15 straight

games, with its last loss coming over two years ago at the hands of, of course, Pasquerilla West.

Howard advanced to this point by easily besting a tough Pangborn squad last week, 31-0. Bishop believes that win was her team's best effort yet.

"Last week showed us how good we can be at picking apart a defense and finding holes in their zone," Bishop said. "And our defense stepped up as always, especially in the red zone."

The Purple Weasels, on the other hand, have prevailed in close contests in their first two rounds, defeating Lewis and McGlenn by a combined seven points. While these margins may have been slim, Koerbel believes that her team is continuing to improve its play.

"Against Lewis, we played terrible. Our defense was slow, and our offense was pretty much anemic," Koerbel said. "I feel really good about our defense after last week, though. Our defense was on the field for about 80 percent of the game, but we got some big stops, and our defensive linemen played great, especially [sophomore defensive lineman] Meghan Schmitt. She played unbelievable."

Pasquerilla West will need that defense to step up again against the wide-open spread offense of Howard, which is averaging over 21 points a game.

On the other side of the ball,

the Purple Weasels will attempt to move the ball using their misdirecting triple-option scheme that has carried them thus far. That offense is led by senior quarterback Simone Bigi, who must read the defense and determine how to attack it on each play.

"The triple option really gives us a lot more versatility, and really forces the defense to stay on their toes and stay home," Bigi said. "The reason it's been so successful so far is our coach, Tim Bossidy. He helped to implement the offense and is really responsible for developing me as a quarterback."

The outcome of the game may very well rest on the Ducks' ability to stop the triple option, which is unlike anything they have seen this year. But while the Purple Weasels' scheme may be new to Howard, Bishop believes that her Ducks will be able to stop it.

"We're really going to rely on our defensive linemen and linebackers to follow the ball and make plays. Flag pulling will be key," Bishop said. "We're expecting a lot out of junior defensive lineman Jenny Gassner and junior safety Caroline Walsh. Bigi has got a great arm for them, and we need Caroline to keep them from going deep."

At the end of the day, both teams said they believe that their team unity will carry them to victory.



SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer
Howard senior quarterback Kayla Bishop runs the ball during Howard's 13-7 win over Pasquerilla West in last year's championship.

"Even though our dorm may be large, we're really close on and off the field. Everything is so close to clicking for us, and I think it will all come together on Sunday," Koerbel said.

Bishop echoed a similar sentiment.

"Last year, we proved that we are capable of winning a championship, even from a dorm as small as Howard. I think that

gave our girls confidence in themselves," Bishop said. "For us seniors it's been a great four years, and it's kind of surreal that it's coming to a close. There's no better way to go out though, than in another championship game in the Stadium."

Kickoff will be 11 a.m. Sunday.

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Talented quarterbacks and friends face off one last time

By ANDREW GASTELUM
Sports Writer

Darkness engulfed the two friends, greeted by silence and anxiety, with a single light at the end of the banner-filled tunnel. The closer they came to the light, the farther the darkness went, before treading onto the most hallowed grounds ever known to college football.

A mere hour later, it was all over.

One left through the tunnel elat-

ed, trophy in hand, tears in her eyes, wondering if she had ever felt anything like it. The other left dejected, grit in hand, tears in her eyes, wondering if she had left it all on the field.

One year later, the two friends meet again, with the same stakes on the line but with another twist to the story.

Simone Bigi remembers last season's women's interhall championship game vividly, summing it up in one word: "losing."

"Something was off," Bigi, No. 2 Pasquerilla West's senior quarter-

back, said.

It's not the walk through the same tunnel that Lou Holtz and Joe Montana once trekked through or the view of Notre Dame Stadium from the field that Bigi recalls from 2009. She remembers losing in the championship game to Howard and watching them walk off the field with her trophy, something that she said drives her to finish what she started this Sunday against Howard.

"I will do whatever I can to not feel like that again," she said. "I am going to give everything that I have to win this game, at any cost."

For the second straight year, Bigi will match up with No. 1 Howard quarterback Kayla Bishop, a former co-rec teammate, who has a different memory of last year's finale.

"I remember running out of that tunnel and playing in an incredibly hard-fought game," the senior said.

Bishop has taken the Ducks to the playoffs in each of the past four years, winning the championship last year for the first time. Bishop captains the Howard aerial attack, which scored all 31 of its points through the air on a talented Pangborn defense last week in the semifinals to punch their return ticket to the Stadium.

"Our offense is very flexible, to the point where we are almost

winging it in the huddle," the San Antonio native said. "We look for matchups that we can take advantage of during the game and take whatever the defense gives us."

Growing up in Texas, football served as just another facet of life to Bishop, who insists that she knew how to call penalties before she could speak in sentences.

"I always wanted to play football since I was a little girl," Bishop said. "My sister would want to play dolls while I preferred to throw the football around in the yard."

Bigi, who didn't become the Purple Weasels' quarterback until last year, also grew up enamored with playing football.

"I would always go to sports camps and love throwing the football," she said. "I also grew up with two brothers who made sure I didn't throw like a girl."

Nevertheless, the time spent practicing as a youth has turned Bigi into a premier quarterback who has taken Pasquerilla West (6-0) to two straight championship games, utilizing the deceptive triple-option as the Purple Weasels' weapon of choice.

"[The triple-option] keeps the defense honest because they don't know whether we are going to pass or run," Bigi said. "When things click on offense, we are unstoppable."

Meanwhile, Bishop attributes her offense's success to pure ath-

leticism.

"We take what natural talent we are given and use it to our advantage," the captain said. "Being in a small dorm, we naturally have great chemistry that translates to the football field."

Even with the intense rivalry growing larger each year, the two friends hold each other in high esteem, knowing that just reaching the finals is an accomplishment.

"Kayla is nearly perfect under pressure and I really admire the way she plays the game," Bigi said.

Bishop echoed those sentiments, when asked about her former teammate.

"[Simone] plays with such intensity that she isn't afraid of anything, which is something that we respect entirely," Bishop said. "And we expect [Pasquerilla West] to come out with a lot of passion and enthusiasm."

On Sunday, the two quarterbacks will experience their own individual sense of déjà vu. Walking out of the tunnel just as they did last year, one will hope to start a dynasty while the other will hope to exact her revenge in "Bigi vs. Bishop II," but no matter what, both say they will remain friends, with memories of this day that will last a lifetime.

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DAN JACOBS/The Observer
Senior quarterbacks Simone Bigi of Pasquerilla West, left, and Kayla Bishop of Howard fight for the interhall trophy.



Allan Joseph

Interhall Editor

The rematch storyline is too good to ignore, but last year's game won't have much effect on this year's contest. If anything, it should only make the game that much closer, as both teams have experienced the thrill of walking down the tunnel before. I certainly expect nothing less than a contest that goes down to the wire.

Pasquerilla West's triple option is extremely well-executed, and as every Notre Dame fan knows all too well, that can make for an offensive explosion. On the other side, Kayla Bishop is a dynamo for the Duck attack. If the Purple Weasels can contain her, they'll be well on their way to exacting revenge for last year. As I see it, though, she's just too evasive for that to happen. Different season, same result.

FINAL SCORE: Howard 27, Pasquerilla West 21



Chris Allen

Interhall Editor

This game has all the makings of an epic showdown. First of all, you have the rematch aspect. No matter who you talk to from either dorm, the players all agree that there is some bad blood between these two teams that dates back to last year. Second, these were clearly the best two teams in women's interhall all season. Howard breezed through the playoffs, while Pasquerilla West has demonstrated a penchant for late-game defensive stands against upstart teams like Lewis and McGlenn.

The one thing that sticks in my mind from last year is the way that the Pasquerilla West players reacted with such devastation after they lost in the Stadium last year. I just can't imagine that Bigi and the rest of the Weasels' senior leaders will let it happen again. Pasquerilla West wins in a classic.

FINAL SCORE: Pasquerilla West 21, Howard 20

IRISH INSIDER

Friday, November 12, 2010

INTERHALL THE OBSERVER

TAKE TWO



Howard and Pasquerilla West face off in a rematch of last year's title game

Photo Illustration by DAN JACOBS