

# IRISH INSIDER

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THE  
OBSERVER



# LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Photo Illustration by Pat Coveney and Brandon Keelean



COMMENTARY

# Slow down: It's not time to drink the kool-aid

It is early September in South Bend, which can mean only one thing — the kool-aid is awfully strong.

Notre Dame sits in the top 20 in both of the major polls. Some experts have the Irish as high as the top 10. Sports Illustrated is so bold as to predict Brian Kelly and company will spend January in a BCS bowl game.

The kool-aid has gotten very strong.

9-3 or 10-2 records seem exceedingly plausible. 11-1 isn't all that much of a reach. And 12-0? Well, it feels closer than it has since the 2006 preseason hype.

Remember as a kid, coming in from playing football in the backyard, all you wanted was the sugar high from the kool-aid? Just have some of this stuff. It's potent.

Looking at this schedule, every game feels winnable. After all, Las Vegas favored Notre Dame in all but one game when the season's lines opened, with the exception being the season-closing trip to face Stanford and senior quarterback Andrew Luck. Then again, no game against Michigan, Michigan State or USC is ever a guarantee. Most Irish fans figure any losses this year will come from some combination of those four games, and Notre Dame certainly won't lose all four.

That kool-aid may be the only drink in town.

That must be why I am extremely thirsty — because I'm not drinking it.

Typically, age brings cynicism. With each decade comes a new handful of memories of dreams dashed, plans gone awry and painful disappointments. Obviously, in my two decades, I haven't seen much of that.

But it is all I have seen when it comes to Notre Dame football.

A small sample size usually leaves room for hope, but my small sample size only includes dreams dashed, wasted talents and the Bush Push.

I began measuring my breaths by Allen Rossum kick, punt and interception returns and I measured my joys by Joey Goodspeed touchdowns in 1996.

My first bitter tears followed a Ron Powlus fumble in over-

time against Air Force that year — just minutes after NBC announcer Tom Hammond warned the one thing you don't want to do in overtime is turn over the ball.

That is the Notre Dame football I know, my classmates know and my generation knows. Not a year since has gone by the Irish haven't lost a game they should have won — Air Force in overtime in 1996, a 23-7 shellacking at the hands of Michigan State the following year, never mind the fact that it was a home game. And don't even get me started on the 14-7 loss to Boston College the week after my birthday in 2002. I was at that one, and still try to rub my eyes to get the visions of green jerseys out of them.

Last year it was Navy and Tulsa, Navy and Tulsa, and, for good measure, Navy and Tulsa.

This is the Notre Dame I know and love. This is the Notre Dame I will expect to see until proven otherwise. This is the Notre Dame I keep coming back to for more.

Albert Einstein once said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again while expecting different results.

For the better part of 15 years, I have drunk the kool-aid annually. For the better part of 15 years, Notre Dame has made me regret the grape aftertaste. It is time to stop doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. No more kool-aid for me.

Oh no, Mr. Kool-Aid Man. Oh no.

Yes, this is touted as the deepest defensive front Notre Dame has trotted out in years. Yes, senior quarterback Dayne Crist is supposedly a more vocal leader these days. Yes, senior receiver Michael Floyd is on a mission to be the best in country.

But these are annual occurrences, if the names are simply changed around a bit.

At some point I may drink the kool-aid again. I may even this year, once the Irish survive a near-disaster against Purdue or Pittsburgh.

I'm just hoping it is fruit punch-flavored, or Orange will do. Perhaps the type they serve at Fiestas, or the type with lots of Sugar in it.

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

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Douglas Farmer  
Editor-in-Chief

FOOTBALL RECRUITING

# OL Goodman visits campus

By DOUGLAS FARMER  
Editor-in-Chief

Notre Dame's 2011 season may begin Saturday, but the recruiting season began long ago. Because of that, only one recruit is officially coming to campus this weekend, as of Wednesday night.

Florida offensive lineman Evan Goodman will watch the Irish take on South Florida, Irish recruiting expert Mike Frank said.

"He is a big-time player, a guy who is real high on their list," said Frank, who heads the online ESPN-affiliate Irish Sports Daily. "He is currently committed to Arizona State, where he has an older brother playing, but he wants to check out his other options."

A slow opening weekend is not unusual, as high school students are just as busy at the beginning of the year as college students.

"The first weekend there just isn't a whole lot of guys coming in," Frank said. "It is [the recruits'] first or second games as well."

"You'll start to see it for Michigan State or Air Force. USC will be the real big game, with at least 20 recruits coming in."

Even once recruits start pouring in, Goodman will still be unique in many respects. Most of the visitors will be a bit smaller than the 6-foot-4 inch, 285 pound Goodman.

"Notre Dame is on a mission to find a lot of skill players," Frank said. "When they mention skill, they are talking about running backs, defensive backs and wide receivers

... You are looking for a lot of guys who could play a lot of positions."

At this point, "a lot" does not rise above single digits. Frank calculates Irish coach Brian Kelly has seven scholarships left to fill in the class of 2012. If an injury were to arise, a player transferred, or if Kelly opted not to invite back certain potential fifth-year players, that number could rise. But, for now, seven recruits will likely join the 14 commits Kelly has already landed. Of those 14 commits, seven fall into the skill player category — two receivers and five defensive backs — as well as three offensive linemen, two defensive ends and two linebackers.

"Right now, I think the plan is to take one offensive lineman and then a bunch of skill guys," Frank said. "It's just priority versus who is available ... If a big-time offensive line-

man wants to commit [such as Goodman], they'll take him. They aren't going to hold out for a skill guy if they know they can get an elite offensive lineman."

No matter what situations develop among linemen and skill players, one position remains satisfied, Frank said.

"I think they are sold on the quarterbacks they have on campus right now," he said. "They have a lot of faith in [freshman] Everett Golson and [sophomore] Andrew Hendrix, and I think that says a lot that they aren't taking another quarterback."

That being said, a prized quarterback will certainly be a piece of next year's recruiting class.

"It also gives them time to really find the right kind of guy in the 2013 class."

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# ‘A more resilient man’

Crist battles through season-ending injuries and offseason competition to earn the top depth chart spot

By ANDREW OWENS  
Associate Sports Editor

When Dayne Crist snaps on his helmet and runs out of the tunnel for Saturday’s season opener, it will not be the first time he has participated in the Irish pregame ritual. But the senior quarterback will have a different feeling now, having battled back from a season-ending knee injury for the second consecutive year to reclaim the role of starting quarterback.

“More than anything, [running out of the tunnel] will have a very gracious feel to it,” Crist said. “I’ll be incredibly thankful for the opportunity to go out there and play again and do everything and do the things I love. After that it’s time to get to work and focus on South Florida.”

The signal-caller began the 2010 season as the starter before sustaining a ruptured patella tendon in the loss to Tulsa on Oct. 30. The team went 4-5 with Crist under center before sophomore quarterback Tommy Rees took over the reins and guided the Irish to a 4-0 finish, at which point many fans were ready to forget about the senior leader.

“It was tough — you couldn’t really worry about those kinds of things,” Crist said. “More than anything it was about getting my body back and just remaining confident in my abilities because I’ve always had a great deal of confidence in what I can do. Really I just try to focus more on what I can do, how I can help this team as opposed to worrying about all the stuff I couldn’t control.

“I just hope [Notre Dame fans] know how much I care and how hard I work to help this team

win.”

The coaching staff has raved about Crist’s performance in fall practice, both with his attitude and on-field performance. The experience has affected him in ways that a healthy 2010 could not have, offensive coordinator Charley Molnar said.

“Here’s what the injuries I think did for Dayne — they made him a more resilient man,” Molnar said.

“In other words, he’s really been able to bounce. It’s taught him to get off the floor when he’s knocked down maybe in a way that he wouldn’t have if he had remained healthy. It made him appreciate the opportunity he got.”

Irish coach Brian Kelly agreed that Crist has the ideal mindset heading into 2011.

“I would say quite frankly and quite honestly, [Crist] is the kind of guy I want to coach,” Kelly said. “He’s tougher mentally. He handles himself in that leadership position in the way I want our quarterbacks to handle it. We have great confidence in his ability to lead our football team to a championship.”

Neither Kelly nor Crist envision a less mobile version of the senior quarterback in 2011, despite the risk of another injury.

“He has to play the game the way it comes to him,” Kelly said when announcing Crist as the starter Aug. 23. “One of the things he did in camp was show

great escapability. After two knee surgeries, he moved well, he was able to extend plays. We couldn’t have somebody that couldn’t extend plays in our offensive system, and he was able to do that.”

Crist said it is not in his nature to hold back on the field because of the past injuries.

“I’m going to play with the same intensity I’ve always played with and that’s the only way I know how to play is with full speed,” he said. “I’m going to do everything I can.”

While Kelly has mentioned “championship” when talking about his quarterback, Crist is focused on the short term and looks at each day as an opportunity to grow in year two under the new system.

“This year it’s about playing with more maturity and having a greater knowledge base of the offense this year,” he said. “I think it’s going to help my game grow, so it’s going to help the offense grow. Understanding the hard work and preparation I do to help my game is going to help our team get better so we’re making sure we’re continuing to do that at all times.”

When the Irish headed into fall camp in Kelly’s inaugural season, anyone and everyone knew the starting quarterback job was Crist’s. This year, he had to beat out freshman Everett Golson and sophomores

Andrew Hendrix and Tommy Rees, who had a 4-0 record on his side.

The battle was atypical because of the close bond the senior and Rees share, Crist said.

“I’ve said this before, but we have a brotherly relationship really,” he said. “When he first got here I tried to help



Observer File Photo

Senior quarterback Dayne Crist looks to throw a pass during last year’s 28-24 loss to Michigan.

him with everything I could help him with and making sure he was comfortable here and now it’s gotten to the point where he came in and played very well and gained some great experience in the games he played in.”

The relationship has evolved from Crist teaching Rees to the two instructing each other.

“It’s great having a guy out there you can really bounce things off,” Crist said. “He sees some things out there I may not have seen and vice versa. We’re trying to help each other get better because we’re both team guys and understand in helping each other get better we’re helping the team get better.”

Crist said he hopes his return from the injuries parallels those of Jason White and Sam Bradford, two Oklahoma quarterbacks who suffered knee injuries and came back to win the Heisman Trophy and, more importantly to Crist, earn berths in the national championship game.

“I think it’s a positive thing and something to aim for and more than anything it instills some confidence that it can be done and has been done before,” he said. “Having that evidence wasn’t the sole thing that was driving me through rehab and things like that but it’s nice seeing those things and having something to shoot for.”

Crist benefits from leading an offense with several offensive weapons that are big-play threats every time they touch the football, such as senior receiver

Michael Floyd and junior tight end Tyler Eifert.

“Having the guys we have on offense makes the quarterback’s job a lot easier, so obviously I need to help those guys because those guys have incredible play-making ability,” Crist said. “I think everybody on this offense has a very aggressive mindset and wants to go out and score a lot of points and that’s the goal of the offense. We’re real excited those guys are back.”

Crist’s effect on the team has improved with an increased vocal leadership and confidence, Molnar said.

“I think he is the same guy,” he said. “He is probably more confident than he has been just knowing that he’s the starter and getting virtually all of his reps right now with the first unit. He’s been even sharper than he was leading into him being announced as the starter.”

For Crist, the motivation has always been the same since he signed with Notre Dame as a five-star quarterback in 2008 and battled through two injuries to reach the point he is at today.

“More than anything, my love for the game, a love of this University and a love for my teammates [motivates me],” he said. “There’s nothing more that I want to do other than play with the rest of the guys on this team and win for this University.”

Contact Andrew Owens at aowens2@nd.edu



SARAH O’CONNOR/The Observer

Senior quarterback Dayne Crist looks on during Notre Dame’s 28-27 loss to Tulsa in 2010. Crist suffered a season-ending knee injury during that loss.



IRISH PASSING

While essentially all of the off-season talk around the Irish offense revolved around the quarterback position, the receiving corps improved dramatically and did so largely away from the headlines (save for perennial media target senior Michael Floyd). Junior Theo Riddick will provide a truly explosive second option across from Floyd, who will always draw double coverage.

Even better for Notre Dame, the playmaking capability of the passing game doesn't stop there. Sophomore receiver TJ Jones has developed greatly from his promising freshman year campaign and seniors Robby Toma and John Goodman have grown into leaders. Freshman DaVaris Daniels has muscled his way into the rotation on the strength of an explosive fall camp and junior tight end Tyler Eifert will be one of Crist's biggest third-down targets.

The Bulls will not be easy to throw against. South Florida lost only one starter from its 2010 secondary and returns depth on its defensive line as well. But given the wealth of options he has when the Irish spread the field, Crist will be able to take advantage of single coverage all over the field.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH RUSHING

Given the throw-first mentality of the Brian Kelly spread system, the ground game will not be the focus of the offense — but that doesn't mean it won't be effective. Junior running back Cierre Wood's efficacy as a playmaker out of the backfield might be the key to a successful season. If he can run the ball effectively and explosively, he will give defensive coordinators nightmares.

Senior running back Jonas Gray has taken the words of former Notre Dame and Pittsburgh Steelers running back Jerome Bettis to heart and has developed a power-rushing game reminiscent of The Bus himself. He will provide a change of pace much like Robert Hughes did to great effect at the end of 2010. In addition, don't be surprised to see versatile freshman Everett Golson and sophomore Andrew Hendrix see some field time in specialized packages designed to get them into open space.

South Florida returns the core of its defensive line and linebacking corps, who will be even better than the 2010 unit, which ranked No. 4 in the nation in terms of rushing touchdowns allowed. The Bulls will almost certainly be able to force the Irish to win through the air and not on the ground.

EDGE: EVEN

IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

At this time a year ago, the Irish barely had the building blocks of a brand-new system. Now, they have all of the play-book down (except for parts that apply to roster-specific situations) and have finally flushed out any traces of the Charlie Weis pro-style offense that may have been remaining. This gives Kelly much more latitude in his play calling and much of what the Irish do will not be on their 2010 game tape. With fewer mental mistakes and an expanded arsenal, Notre Dame will have a significant tactical advantage.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

Head-to-head

Notre Dame Offense

WR	7	TJ Jones	So.
	16	DaVaris Daniels	Fr.
WR	6	Theo Riddick	Jr.
	9	Robby Tomaa	Jr.
LT	70	Zack Martin	Jr.
	72	Nick Martin	Fr.
LG	66	Chris Watt	Jr.
	76	Andrew Nuss	Sr.
C	52	Braxston Cave	Sr.
	57	Mike Golic Jr.	Sr.
RG	78	Trevor Robinson	Sr.
	65	Conor Hanratty	Fr.
RT	75	Taylor Dever	Sr.
	72	Nick Martin	Fr.
TE	80	Tyler Eifert	Jr.
	83	Mike Ragone	Sr.
WR	3	Michael Floyd	Sr.
	81	John Goodman	Sr.

Notre Dame Defense

CB	12	Robert Blanton	Sr.
	23	Lo Wood	So.
OLB	45	Darius Fleming	Sr.
	1	Ishaq Williams	Fr.
DE	90	Ethan Johnson	Sr.
	19	Aaron Lynch	Fr.
NG	98	Sean Cwynar	Sr.
	9	Louis Nix III	So.
DE	89	Kapron Lewis-Moore	Sr.
	7	Stephon Tuitt	Fr.
OLB	55	Prince Shembo	So.
	13	Danny Spond	So.
CB	4	Gary Gray	Sr.
	2	Bennett Jackson	So.

IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

At this point, kicker David Ruffer is essentially automatic. One of 2010's surprise stories, Ruffer returns for his final year of eligibility and gives the Irish a sure scoring option any time they cross the 35-yard-line.

The Irish were mediocre at best in the return game last year, and Kelly has hinted that he may look to faces as familiar as Floyd to give the Irish an explosive option. Realistically, though, expect to see young, unproven playmakers returning kicks and punts.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

Notre Dame Specialists

PK	97	David Ruffer	Sr.
P	35	Ben Turk	Jr.
LS	60	Jordan Cowart	Jr.
PR	6	Theo Riddick	Jr.
KR	6	Theo Riddick	Jr.
KO	2	Bennett Jackson	So.
	27	Kyle Brindza	Fr.

S	22	Harrison Smith	Sr.
	15	Dan McCarthy	Sr.
ILB	48	Dan Fox	Jr.
	44	Carlo Calabrese	Jr.
ILB	5	Manti Te'o	Jr.
	54	Anthony McDonald	Sr.
S	26	Jamoris Slaughter	Sr.
	17	Zeke Motta	Jr.

Predictions

Allan Joseph  
Sports Editor



South Florida is not a familiar name to most Irish fans – but the Bulls cannot be overlooked. Quarterback B.J. Daniels leads a potent offensive attack, and the Bulls are quick on the defensive side of the ball. This will not be an easy test for the Irish – but they are up to the task. Dayne Crist has an embarrassment of targets when he throws the ball, and the ground game will be an effective change of pace. On the other side of the ball, the defensive line will harass Daniels and limit his effectiveness.

It's a season opener, though, and that will bring some jitters and mishaps with it. The Irish will win, but not quite as comfortably as they could have. The outcome, however, won't be in doubt.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 31, South Florida 21

Douglas Farmer  
Editor-in-Chief



All around the world opponents crumble for the Irish.

Okay, not really. That's the whole point of my column on page 2 of this Insider.

Every year, the season-opener comes to Notre Dame ready for the biggest game of its life — see San Diego State, Nevada and Purdue over the last three years. Skip Holtz and South Florida will be just as motivated.

But every year, the Irish come into their opener actually ready for a game. For the past three years, Notre Dame has set fans aflutter with its opening-weekend flair. This year won't be any different, but again, it's only one weekend.

So, for this weekend, the Irish can go ahead and just fly.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 35, South Florida 13

Eric Prister  
Sports Writer



For the first time in years, the Irish ended the season better than they started. Wins over rivals USC and Miami, as well as over Utah and Army, to end the 2010 campaign propelled Notre Dame into the off-season on a high note, leading to its highest preseason rank since 2006. Dayne Crist is healthy, Michael Floyd is back and the defense looks stronger than it has in some time. Brian Kelly has changed the attitude around the football program, and changed it for the better. The Irish are frankly tired of being average, of being just another Notre Dame team. Losses may come, because in games against Michigan and USC, anything can happen. But one will not come at the hands of the son of the last Irish coach to win a national championship.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 23, South Florida 10



# o-Head

## USF Defense

CB	6	Kayvon Webster	Jr.
	24	Ernie Tabuteau	Jr.
EDGE: NOTRE DAME			
OLB	16	Reshard Cliett	Fr.
	13	Curtis Weatherspoon	Sr.
DE	97	Ryne Giddins	So.
	54	Julius Forte	So.
DT	46	Cory Grissom	Jr.
	53	Elkino Watson	Fr.
DT	91	Keith McCaskill	Sr.
	92	Luke Sager	So.
DE	41	Patrick Hampton	Sr.
	96	Anthony Hill	Jr.
OLB	34	DeDe Lattimore	So.
	35	Mike Jeune	Jr.
CB	2	Quenton Washington	Sr.
	30	JaQuez Jenkins	So.

## USF Offense

WR	17	Sterling Griffin	So.
	83	Deonte Welch	Fr.
TE	9	Evan Landi	Jr.
	88	Andreas Shields	Jr.
RT	70	Quinterrius Eatmon	Fr.
	73	Damien Edwards	Jr.
RG	60	Danous Estenor	Jr.
	66	Kevin McCaskill	Sr.
C	79	Chaz Hine	Sr.
	78	Austin Reiter	Fr.
LG	55	Jeremiah Warren	Sr.
	65	Tony Kibler	Fr.
LT	74	Mark Popek	Jr.
	75	Darren Powe	Sr.
WR	11	AJ Love	Sr.
	80	Stephen Bravo-Brown	So.
WR	25	Joel Miller	Sr.
	15	Victor Marc	Jr.

**USF OFFENSIVE COACHING**  
Offensive coordinator Todd Fitch's unit sputtered as the 85th-ranked offense in the country in points per game in 2010, with 24.1. The Bulls struggled with both running and passing the ball, finishing No. 71 and No. 101, respectively. Much of their success against a talented Notre Dame defense will depend on the performance of quarterback B.J. Daniels.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

**USF RUSHING**  
South Florida lost talented running back Moise Plancher to graduation after rushing for 793 yards and five touchdowns in 2010. The Bulls also enter 2011 returning only seniors Jeremiah Warren and Chaz Hine on the offensive line, so gaining consistent yards on a talented Notre Dame front seven may prove to be difficult. The Irish only lose linebacker Brian Smith and nose guard Ian Williams from their front seven. The squad went 4-0 in the absence of Williams, who was replaced by nose guards Sean Cwynar and Hafis Williams. Louis Nix enters the front seven rotation this year, as do freshmen Aaron Lynch, Stephon Tuitt and Ishaq Williams. The Irish return its most talented group of linebackers in recent memory, with All-American candidate Manti Te'o, Darius Fleming, Prince Shembo and new starter junior Dan Fox, who supplanted Carlo Calabrese as a starting inside linebacker.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

**USF PASSING**  
The Bulls return only four starters from an offense that ranked 101st in passing. Senior quarterback B.J. Daniels returns to lead the South Florida passing attack. The 6-foot, 223-pound signal caller started 12 games last year, with mixed results, as he threw 13 interceptions and only 11 touchdowns in those contests. South Florida lost a starter at wide receiver, its tight end and three offensive linemen from its pass attack. Junior receiver Evan Landi caught 28 passes for 390 yards and 2 touchdowns last season. Most of Notre Dame's secondary remains intact after a strong finish to the 2010 campaign. Harrison Smith, Gary Gray, Robert Blanton, Jamoris Slaughter and Zeke Motta all started or saw considerable action last season and improved immensely during the course of the season. Smith is viewed as a potential All-American candidate after snagging the game-clinching interception at USC and picking off Miami's Jacory Harris three times in the Sun Bowl.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

### USF SPECIAL TEAMS

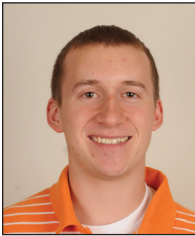
Kicker Maikon Bonani was one of the most consistent kickers in the Big East for the Bulls last season, converting 17-of-21 field goal attempts, with a season-long of 47 yards. Punter Justin Brockhaus-Kann averaged 37.6 yards per punt in 2010, with a long of 57 yards. The Bulls have an explosive return game at both kick returner and punt returner. Punt returner Lindsay Lamar returned two kicks for scores last year.

EDGE: USF

## USF Specialists

PK	28	Maikon Bonani	Jr.
	18	Justin Brockhaus-Kann	Jr.
P	68	Mike Walsh	Jr.
	10	Terrence Mitchell	So.
PR	5	Lindsey Lamar	Jr.
	99	Marvin Kloss	Fr.
KO			

**Andrew Owens**  
Associate Sports Editor



South Florida has no shortage of speed on its team, and should not be taken lightly. They enter 2011 as one of the favorites to win the Big East after finishing with an 8-5 record that was identical to Notre Dame's in 2010. The Bulls will keep it close in the first half, but their inability to move the ball against a top-notch Irish defense will lead to excellent field position for a Notre Dame offense with plenty of playmakers.

The Irish defense will be the best Notre Dame fans have seen since the '90s — even better than the 2002 unit that carried the team to a 10-win season, and it all starts with a dominating performance against a worthy opponent. Manti Te'o will anchor the defense to top-15 finishes in every major category.

PREDICTION: Notre Dame 27, South Florida 10

**Chris Masoud**  
Assistant Managing Editor



Notre Dame's deceptively difficult schedule begins this Saturday with a legitimate test in the form of South Florida. Dayne Crist's return to the offense brings back the deep game, setting up an interesting matchup with the experienced Bulls secondary. Skip Holtz's long-awaited return to Notre Dame may be a welcome sight to some Irish fans, but I would have liked to see someone with a different last name.

Actually, Holtz is a good coach because he's a good coach, and South Florida is a good team because of B.J. Daniels. As long as the defensive line holds, the outside backers keep containment and Manti Te'o introduces himself to Daniels, the Irish should run away with the first win of the year.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 31, South Florida 13

**Dick Vitale**  
@DickieV



@NDObsSports Tough as USF is talented but the ND fighting IRISH will make their faithful happy 31- 24! Cant wait to have fun @ ND!  
FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 31, South Florida 24

Via Twitter









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