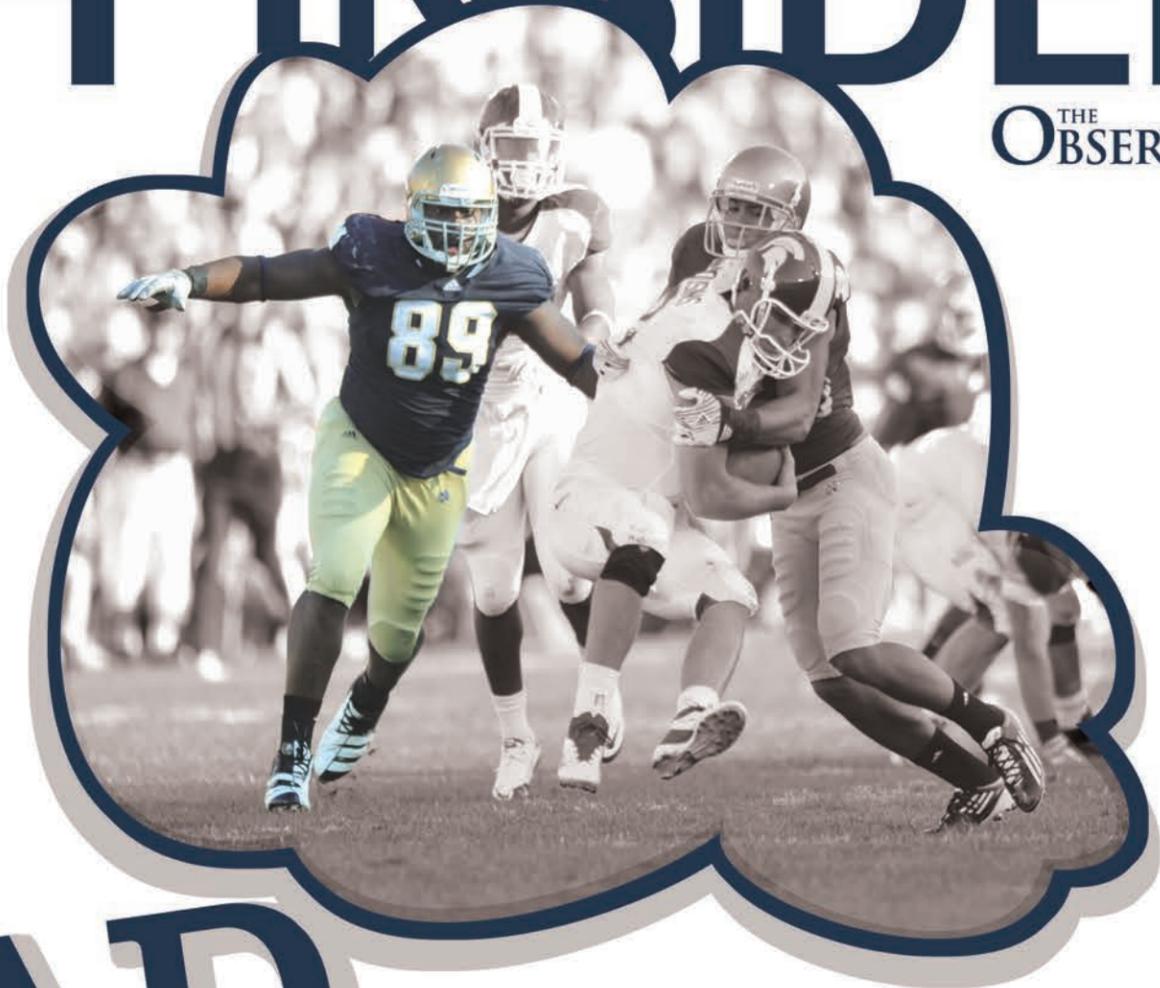


IRISH INSIDER

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2011

THE
OBSERVER



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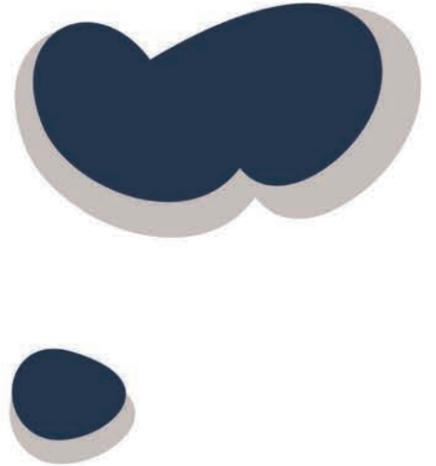


Photo Illustration by Pat Coveney and Brandon Keelean

COMMENTARY

October will show who Notre Dame really is

September may be filled with excitement over the new season, and November may hold the push for a BCS bowl, but for this year's Irish, October is the most important month of the season. Four weeks from now, when Halloween festivities are in full swing, we'll know whether the Irish have been unmasked or whether the start of the season was the only time Notre Dame

donned a costume. In September, the Irish showed their best and their worst — and won the game they played worst in (Pittsburgh), while losing the game they showed their best play in (Michigan). While the start to the season was ugly, Notre Dame regrouped and battled back to 2-2.

November is always crunch time. While the Irish face weak Wake Forest, Maryland and Boston College squads, those are classic "upset specials." As Notre Dame streaks towards an undefeated record in its final 10 contests, a matchup with No. 4/7 Stanford looms at the end of the season. A 4-0 November could mean a January bowl game in Glendale or New Orleans.

But none of that matters if the Irish struggle in the rest of October following the win over the massively inferior Boilermakers. It starts with Air Force. Quite simply, the Falcons are nothing short of explosive. Andrew Luck's Stanford offense might be a little more talented, but the Air Force triple option (with serious vertical passing thrown in) is probably the most difficult offense to stop on the schedule.

Last year's Irish squad would have had all sorts of problems with this team. Air Force would have been able to run the triple option both over and around the softer, less disciplined defensive front — and then would have hit the secondary for big gains. This year's squad shows no signs of those symptoms, but then again, it hasn't faced an offense like this. Saturday's

game will be a true test of defensive progress, as it won't just be an athletic test. It will be a mental test as well.

After a much-needed bye week, Notre Dame will face USC in a game that will be absolutely flooded with distractions. From stars like Will Ferrell on the sidelines to a star-studded group of recruits in the stands, from the first night game in over two decades to the unparalleled scrutiny that comes from any Battle for the Jeweled Shillelagh, there will be distractions galore when the Irish can least afford them.

If Notre Dame can close off those distractions and defeat the Trojans, it will have shown a level of maturity seldom seen recently in South Bend. Last year's win over USC was a game between two struggling programs. This year, every eye in America will be focused on the prime-time broadcast. A win on that stage would be much-needed.

And then, of course, there's Navy. Brian Kelly has tried to change the culture surrounding the Irish. There may never be a bigger test of that effort than whether the players truly expect to beat Navy — and then follow through. This program has not struggled recently because it couldn't beat better teams. It's struggled because it's failed to defeat less-talented teams. If the Irish beat Navy like it's just another game, then Kelly might have succeeded in returning the Irish to a place where beating Navy is an expectation, never a question.

If Notre Dame can win the three games remaining in October, the implications will be much more far-reaching than a top-25 ranking and a shot at a BCS ranking. Winning the next three games means the Irish have really developed a stalwart defense. It means that they have really developed true focus. It means they have really returned the culture to what it once was.

So when Notre Dame arrives at its Halloween party, it'll be dressed as a BCS contender. By then, we'll know whether that's a costume or not.

Contact Allan Joseph at ajoseph2@nd.edu
The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.



Allan Joseph
Sports Editor

FOOTBALL RECRUITING

RB Mahone commits to ND

By ALLAN JOSEPH
Sports Editor

While Cierre Wood showed off the present-day Irish ground game last Saturday, Notre Dame took a big step in securing the future of the running game when Ohio running back Will Mahone committed to Notre Dame, Irish recruiting expert Mike Frank said.

"I think it's a huge get," said Frank, who runs the ESPN affiliate Irish Sports Daily. "Notre Dame really needed ... a bunch of running backs, but they also need kind of a bigger back."

"Will Mahone's actually a very fast player, he's got very good speed, but he's also more of a power play. He can run inside the player, and he can run some people over."

Frank said Mahone's commitment allows the Irish to focus on finding a more elusive running back to complement Mahone's power.

"Now they'll be able to focus on other types of backs, more of the speedy guys that can hit the home run," Frank said. "[They're looking at] a guy like [North Carolina running back] Keith Marshall or [California running back] Byron Mashall. One of those types of players is more of a shifty player, more explosive, more of a Cierre Wood-type running back."

In fact, Mahone has already become an asset on the recruiting trail. Shortly after he committed to Notre Dame, Mahone took to Twitter to attempt to convince Keith Marshall to join him in South Bend. Frank said that while many observers see Keith Marshall going to Georgia, the Irish still have a

real shot at getting the explosive back to commit.

"He's got a strong interest in Notre Dame," Frank said. "It's all going to come down to his visit ... He's real familiar with [Georgia], he's been down there a number of times, he's real comfortable with the coaching staff. He'll have a good chance to play early there as well. We'll see how that all plays out. He's never been to Notre Dame, so it will be interesting to see his thoughts on Notre Dame."

As the Irish return home for the first time in three weeks, they will host Florida athlete Nelson Agholor on a visit. Agholor plays a number of positions, including cornerback, receiver, running back and safety. Agholor's tangible traits and his versatility make him highly valuable, Frank said.

"He is a tremendous talent. I think he is one of the top 10 players in the entire country," Frank said. "He's a bigger kid. He's got great speed. He's an extremely explosive player, and he's exactly what Notre Dame is missing. They have some fast players on their squad right now, but he's an extremely explosive player." If Agholor commits to the Irish, Frank expects him to have an immediate impact on the offensive side of the ball.

"This is a five-star talent. If he comes to Notre Dame, I would guess he would challenge immediately for playing time," Frank said. "He brings something that nobody else on the squad or this class has. That's no disrespect to the other guys ... he's just very elusive and very explosive. So

this is your Rocket Ismail type of player. Notre Dame has been lacking those types of players for awhile."

Virginia safety C.J. Proise will also take his official visit to campus this weekend, though he has already committed to the Irish. Frank said that while Proise may not be nationally known, he is one of the hidden talents of the Notre Dame class.

"He's a tremendous prospect. He's a bigger kid, and he can really run," Frank said. "He's one of the kids that sometimes gets pushed under the radar on the national level, but around that area ... all those schools wanted him badly and offered him. He's a really, really good prospect. I think he's one of those guys that may come in with a little less fanfare than some of the others, but I think he's a guy that will really surprise people."

While this week is important for the Irish, Frank could not help but look ahead two weeks, to Notre Dame's matchup against USC.

"The motherlode of talent is coming in for official and unofficial visits," Frank said. "It's probably Notre Dame's biggest recruiting weekend I could ever remember. I've never seen this much talent come in in one weekend."

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out Mike Frank's irishsportsdaily.com. Email Mike at mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net and tell him The Observer sent you.

Contact Allan Joseph at ajoseph2@nd.edu

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Late convert

Despite unconventional journey to Notre Dame, senior defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore thrives with Irish

By CHRIS MASOUD
Assistant Managing Editor

The dream of donning the gold and blue, running out of the tunnel and playing in Notre Dame Stadium usually begins at a very early age. Legendary games like the 1993 contest against No. 1 Florida State or the 1988 "Catholics vs. Convicts" battle against Miami foster the desire for an aspiring football player to lace up for the Irish.

But in Texas, the Big 12 reigns supreme, and for Irish senior defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore, landing at Notre Dame was less of a dream-come-true story than a dream dashed.

"Being a Texas kid, your dream schools are Texas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, [Texas] A&M — the Big 12. You kind of stay close to home," Lewis-Moore said. "I was actually committed to Texas A&M my senior year in high school."

A native of Weatherford, Texas, Lewis-Moore was recruited into the Aggie program by then-coach Dennis Franchione. But following Franchione's resignation and subsequent hiatus from college football, Lewis-Moore's college football career took an abrupt 180-degree turn.

"After he resigned after [the Aggies] upset Texas that year, I was kind of in a fluster, didn't know what I wanted to do," he said. "I wanted to talk to my mom, who didn't really have any idea how the recruiting process worked, so I de-committed from Texas A&M at the time, and that's when I took some trips."

Those trips included a re-

cruiting visit to Colorado and, eventually, Notre Dame.

"I came up here, visited, loved the school, loved the people, even though it was like negative 10 [degrees] outside with the sun shining," Lewis-Moore said. "I still had a lot of fun."

Facing the prospects of harsh winters and a life away from home, Lewis-Moore's path took another 180 when he re-committed to Texas A&M.

But after conversations with close family and friends, the recruit decided to take a leap of faith.

"My mom — she was happy for me — but at the same time challenged me to do something different with my life.

She challenged me to get out of my comfort zone, and my mom being a schoolteacher, she had a real positive impact in my life. Academics was always first and I feel like Notre Dame's one of the best academic institutions in the country."

It seems Mom knows best, as in his fourth year as a member of the Irish, Lewis-Moore has emerged as a pivotal player on a defense that has bolstered the Irish following a disappointing 0-2 start.

In addition to his contribution on the field, Lewis-Moore has accepted his mother's challenge both in the classroom and in the locker room. Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco hails the senior as one of the key members of the entire football organization.

"I would say that [Kapron] understands his place on the team as a leader and a starter," Diaco said. "He doesn't have any feeling of being threatened by anyone else. He understands how important he is to the organization and how much value he has in the organization."

After redshirting during his freshman year, Lewis-Moore earned his first start against Michigan State in 2009 in what turned out to be a thrilling victory for Notre Dame. Then-senior Kyle McCarthy intercepted a pass late in the fourth quarter, as the Irish defense came through to seal a 33-30 win.

"It was a lot of fun, but I was nervous too," Lewis-Moore said. "Running out there, 81,000 people screaming, your mind's going 100 miles an hour. I had a lot of fun, I enjoyed it and it's something I will never forget."

While walking out of the tunnel has become "old hat" for the senior, he admitted he still feels the goose bumps every time he walks onto the field. But in between the whistles, Lewis-Moore has been playing with a renewed focus as part of a core defensive line that held Purdue to just 84 rushing yards in Notre Dame's 38-10 victory last Saturday.

Lewis-Moore leads the line with 10 unassisted tackles, three for a loss, and a forced fumble this season.

"He's 290-plus pounds, and he moves like a guy who is 245, 250 pounds," Irish coach Brian Kelly said. "Quick feet plus his size give him the ability to do really good things."

Lewis-Moore and the Irish face one of their staunchest tests of the season against the prolific Air Force offense this Saturday. That challenge becomes even more difficult following an ankle injury to senior defensive end Ethan Johnson, Lewis-Moore's partner on the line.

Lewis-Moore said the two senior ends have developed a close friendship over the years, barring a minor setback.

"Ethan's a great guy, I love him," Lewis-Moore said. "Except one year, when he changed his number to 90 when he was nine. We've always bonded, but he was always on the other side of the locker, I was right here.

"I'm lucky and I'm very privileged to be playing football for this great institution."

Kapron Lewis-Moore
senior defensive end



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

Senior defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore has the fourth-most tackles on the Irish defense with 22 this season.

When he changed his number, that's when we really started to [develop] a great bond."

Lewis-Moore's roommate and close friend, senior linebacker Darius Fleming said the senior is well-equipped to handle the load Saturday.

"Kap's been a leader all year, he's been doing an awesome job," he said. "Kap will be fine in that role picking up for Ethan and just carrying that D-line. That's one of my best friends. He's a character. He's funny. He's a tough kid. No one dislikes Kap."

That includes a talented duo of Irish freshmen in Aaron Lynch and Stephon Tuitt, who have slowly worked their way into the Irish rotation. Lewis-Moore has embraced the additional role of mentor for the rookies, whose development can be attributed in part to the unofficial coaching of the senior defensive end.

"He understands that these guys are going to help us be successful, so he's doing everything that he can to help them with film study, with things on the field, off the field — just being that mentor for them," Fleming said. "He's not letting the fact that they're battling for his position get into his head. He's just being the leader that he is ... At times, I look up to him."

Lewis-Moore credits the freshmen for adapting quickly to the intensity of the college game, allowing him to take a less hands-on approach and letting the freshmen develop into their own style.

"They came in and they responded well," he said. "It's not so much teaching. You can explain running down the tunnel, being at Notre Dame — how awesome it is. You're always under the microscope, always

on the big stage ... Playing in big games, I think they kind of feel for themselves that this is a great institution."

But the mentor admits he still has room for improvement before his final year of eligibility in 2012. Diaco said he expects Lewis-Moore's continued progression to pay dividends this season and into the future.

"Tangibly, he's going to get bigger, faster, stronger. Cardiovascularly, he's going to be able to play harder longer. He can play a lot harder longer than he could a year ago, and it's only going to continue to improve. Mentally, he'll continue to take his mental game to that next level of understanding."

A marketing major, Lewis-Moore hopes to put his degree to good use upon graduation. In the meantime, the senior looks to bolster the defense and propel Notre Dame into a 10-win season.

I feel like we're a great team, and starting off 0-2 is kind of frustrating," Lewis-Moore said. "We're so much better than what we've shown, but I think the last couple of weeks we've shown that we are a great team and we've got to take one game at a time."

Despite the flip-flop regarding his decision to enroll at Notre Dame, Lewis-Moore said he never regretted his decision, nor his mother's advice, to suit up for the Irish.

"If I would have gone anywhere else — there's no place like Notre Dame to me. There's no place that you can have such a great institution with great people ... I'm blessed, I'm lucky and I'm very privileged to be playing football for this great institution."

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PAT COVENEY/The Observer

Senior defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore tackles Michigan quarterback Denard Robinson during Notre Dame's 35-31 loss Sept. 10. Lewis also forced a fumble during the loss.

IRISH PASSING

In last week's 38-10 win over Purdue, sophomore quarterback Tommy Rees played his best game of the season. Though not flawless, he completed 24-of-40 passes for 254 yards, three touchdowns and, for the first time, did not turn the ball over.

Senior receiver Michael Floyd caught 12 passes for 137 yards and a touchdown, which came on a 35-yard strike from Rees in the first minute of the game. Floyd found much more space against the Boilermakers than he did the previous week against Pittsburgh. If Air Force double-teams Floyd like Pittsburgh did, another target will need to step up to ensure the unit's success, a role junior tight end Tyler Eifert has filled in the past.

The Falcons are ranked 21st in the nation in pass defense, though they have not played an offense as talented as Notre Dame's to this point. Five Air Force players have interceptions this season, and the defense will look to add to its 10-sack total and pressure Rees into making poor decisions.

EDGE: EVEN

IRISH RUSHING

Junior Cierre Wood and senior Jonas Gray make a dangerous combination at running back and they are getting more confident and productive as the season progresses. Last week, the Irish rushed for 287 yards, the most in eight years. Wood finished with 191 yards and a touchdown and Gray picked up 94 yards and a score. The Notre Dame offensive line is getting a good push and creating large holes for the speedy backs to find.

Air Force allowed 334 rushing yards against an excellent Navy ground attack in its 35-34 win Saturday. While the Notre Dame rushing style is much different than the Midshipmen's, the Falcons should nonetheless have difficulty stopping Wood and Gray. Offensive success for the Irish depends on asserting a strong running game.

With the Air Force offense attempting to control the clock through its rushing game, Notre Dame needs to sustain long drives or the Irish defense will be on the field for most of the four quarters.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

Irish coach Brian Kelly and offensive coordinator Charley Molnar realize the Irish will need a consistent rushing attack throughout the game to beat Air Force.

The coaches are likely to involve more playmakers in the passing game. Junior receiver Theo Riddick did not have a touch at Purdue, and his season has been a disappointment after much preseason hype.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

RB	20	Cierre Wood	Jr.
	25	Jonas Gray	Sr.
QB	11	Tommy Rees	So.
	10	Dayne Crist	Sr.

EDGE: AIR FORCE

IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

The unit continues to be a glaring weakness for Notre Dame. Even senior kicker David Ruffer, who did not miss a field goal until the Sun Bowl last season, is only 3-of-7 in 2011.

Junior punter Ben Turk was only called upon twice in the Purdue game, but averaged 44 yards per punt and downed one inside the 20-yard line. Field position will be crucial in this weekend's matchup.

Senior punt returner John Goodman continues to struggle fielding punts. He has muffed multiple returns this season, is not able to make defenders miss and made some questionable decisions by allowing the punt to roll.

The lone bright spot of the unit is freshman George Atkinson, who is a threat to score a touchdown every time he touches the ball.

IRISH SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	South Florida	(L, 23-20)
Sept. 10	@ Michigan	(L, 35-31)
Sept. 17	Michigan St.	(W, 31-13)
Sept. 24	@ Pittsburgh	(W, 15-12)
Oct. 1	@ Purdue	(W, 38-10)
Oct. 8	Air Force	
Oct. 22	USC	
Oct. 29	Navy	
Nov. 5	@ Wake Forest	
Nov. 12	Maryland	
Nov. 19	Boston College	
Nov. 26	@ Stanford	

Notre Dame Specialists

PK	97	David Ruffer	Sr.
P	35	Ben Turk	Jr.
LS	60	Jordan Cowart	Jr.
PR	81	John Goodman	Sr.
	6	Theo Riddick	Jr.
KR	34	George Atkinson	Fr.
	28	Austin Collinsworth	So.
KO	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.

CB	12	Robert Blanton	Sr.
	23	Lo Wood	So.

OLB	45	Darius Fleming	Sr.
	46	Steve Filer	Sr.
DE	90	Ethan Johnson	Sr.
	19	Aaron Lynch	Fr.
NG	9	Louis Nix	So.
	98	Sean Cwynar	Sr.
DE	89	Kapron Lewis-Moore	Sr.
	7	Stephon Tuitt	Fr.
OLB	55	Prince Shembo	So.
	56	Troy Niklas	Fr.

CB	4	Gary Gray	Sr.
	2	Bennett Jackson	So.

Head-to

Notre Dame Offense

WR	7	TJ Jones	So.
	16	DaVaris Daniels	Fr.
WR	6	Theo Riddick	Jr.
	9	Robby Toma	Jr.
LT	70	Zack Martin	Jr.
	72	Nick Martin	Fr.
LG	66	Chris Watt	Jr.
	76	Andrew Nuss	Sr.
C	52	Braxton Cave	Sr.
	57	Mike Golic Jr.	Sr.
RG	78	Trevor Robinson	Sr.
	65	Conor Hanratty	Fr.
RT	75	Taylor Dever	Sr.
	74	Christian Lombard	So.
TE	80	Tyler Eifert	Jr.
	18	Ben Koyack	Fr.

WR	3	Michael Floyd	Sr.
	81	John Goodman	Sr.

Notre Dame Defense

Predictions

Allan Joseph

Sports Editor



You know what's scary? Air Force might be the best offensive team Notre Dame will face all season — it's definitely the most difficult to stop. The Falcons execute the triple option just as well as Navy or Georgia Tech, but they throw the ball more effectively than either of those teams. It'll be pretty clear after about two offensive series if the Irish are up to the

task of stopping that juggernaut. Normally, I'd say Notre Dame fans should cower in fear from this matchup. But this year is different. For once, the defensive line is the best unit on the team. There's enough athleticism and experience in the defensive front seven to contain the option. If the defense can just slow the Falcons down, the offense can put up enough points to win. It might look scary, but there's no reason for fear.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 35, Air Force 24

Douglas Farmer

Editor-in-Chief



I've got nothing. Even my Pandora has failed to deliver inspiration this week. Perhaps that should be expected when going up against an offense unlike any other.

Air Force presents many challenges to Bob Diaco's defense. If the triple-option run by Navy presented difficulties last year, then Air Force's seemingly endless variety of options could render the Irish defense as effective as a flock of chickens with all their heads cut off.

Let's hope it doesn't get that bad. In fact, it shouldn't. Primarily because Brian Kelly should rely on his own running game to keep the ball out of the Falcons' hands until Notre Dame has a comfortable cushion. If Cierre Wood and Jonas Gray can combine for 100 yards or so in the first quarter, the Falcons won't stand a chance.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 34, Air Force 13

Eric Prister

Senior Sports Writer



Coming off a commanding victory over Purdue Saturday, the Irish are primed for a continuation of their winning ways — or for a major let-down. Seeing how Notre Dame reacts after such a big win could set the tone for the rest of the season.

Once again Notre Dame enters the contest against Air Force as the better team, which has not made much of a difference so far this season. But like the Purdue game, the Irish should be superior athletically to the Falcons, which is a good sign for playmakers like Michael Floyd and Cierre Wood.

But Notre Dame's defense will be the deciding factor in the game. If it can keep Air Force's offense in check, the Irish offense should have no trouble outscoring the Falcons.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 31, Air Force 20

o-Head

Air Force Defense

CB	5	Anthony Wright	Sr.
	24	P.J. Adeji-Paul	Sr.
OLB	9	Alex Means	Jr.
	44	Patrick Hennessee	Sr.
DE	95	Harry Kehs	Sr.
	97	Nick Fitzgerald	Fr.
NG	89	Nick DeJulio	Jr.
	94	Cody Miller	Jr.
DE	88	Ben Kopacka	Sr.
	53	Ross Fleming	Sr.
OLB	46	Jamil Cooks	So.
	2	Stephen Atrice	Jr.
CB	14	Josh Hall	Sr.
	23	Steffon Batts	So.

AIR FORCE OFFENSIVE COACHING

Falcons coach Troy Calhoun knows Air Force needs to move the ball up and down the field Saturday in order to score points and keep the ball out of the hands of the Irish playmakers on offense. If the Falcons can sustain long drives and keep the Irish defense on the field, they should be able to score enough points to give the team a chance to win.

EDGE: EVEN

FS	18	Anthony Wooding	So.
	26	Kevin Jablonsky	Sr.
ILB	32	Jordan Waiwaiole	Sr.
	47	Ken Lamendola	Sr.
ILB	41	Brady Amack	Sr.
	42	Austin Niklas	Jr.
SS	6	Jon Davis	Sr.
	8	Bobby Watkins	Fr.

AIR FORCE RUSHING

Running the ball is the bread and butter of this team. Running the triple option, the Falcons rank third in the nation in rushing, with 364.5 yards per game.

Five Air Force players have rushed for over 100 yards this season. Running back Asher Clark leads the unit in rushing with 382 yards and three touchdowns.

The key for the Irish rush defense is sticking to the assignments and not letting the Falcons control the tempo, as Navy did when they gashed the Notre Dame defense for 367 yards in 2010. Defensive coordinator Bob Diaco led the defense to a much more successful second attempt against the option a month later when Notre Dame did not allow a touchdown in the 28-3 win over Army.

Saturday marks the first time Notre Dame has faced the triple option this season, and it may have to do so without senior defensive end Ethan Johnson, who sustained an ankle injury against Purdue and is questionable for Air Force. Johnson is a productive run-stopper and, as a senior, brings valuable experience in playing assignment football.

EDGE: AIR FORCE

AIR FORCE PASSING

The Falcons do not like to throw the football, as indicated by the amount of throws senior quarterback Tim Jefferson has attempted through four games this season: 47. Only two receivers have gained over 100 yards in the passing game in season totals, and Mikel Hunter is the only big play threat on the edge.

Air Force prefers to use the pass to change pace when its rushing attack is succeeding. By using play action, the Falcons can often pick up a large gain when opponents pile defenders into the box to stop the run.

The pressure created by the Irish defensive line fuels the secondary in slowing down an opponent's aerial attack. Notre Dame has playmakers on both the defensive line and at linebacker that force the quarterback into making poor decisions.

After a rough start in the first few weeks of the season, senior cornerback Gary Gray has mostly returned to his previous form and is a productive member of the Notre Dame secondary. Senior Robert Blanton continues to be a shutdown cornerback on the edge of the Irish defense.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

Air Force Offense

WR	15	Jonathan Warzeka	Sr.
	85	Zack Kauth	Sr.
TE	81	Joshua Freeman	Sr.
	84	Daniel Pickett	Sr.
RT	75	Jason Kons	Jr.
	74	Alex Huskisson	So.
RG	67	Jordan Eason	Jr.
	76	Evan Kaufmann	Jr.
C	54	Michael Hester	Sr.
	65	Michael Husar	So.
LG	73	A.J. Wallerstein	Sr.
	63	Jeff Benson	Sr.
LT	70	Kevin Whitt	Sr.
	77	Jerry Henry	So.
WR	10	Mikel Hunter	Jr.
	27	Ty MacArthur	So.

AIR FORCE SPECIAL TEAMS

Parker Herrington has converted three of his four attempted field goals in 2011, with a long of 45 yards. The Falcons have an excellent punter in David Baska, who is averaging 47.3 yards per attempt and has kicked three inside the opponent's 20-yard line. Calhoun has called for Jefferson to punt the ball twice from the quarterback position.

Air Force has little explosiveness in the return game, but might be able to take advantage of the Notre Dame coverage units, which have not been as strong as they were in 2010.

EDGE: EVEN

Air Force Specialists

PK	99	Erik Soderberg	Sr.
P	19	David Baska	So.
LS	56	Colton Reid	Sr.
PR	6	Jon Davis	Sr.
KR	15	Jonathan Warzeka	Sr.
KO	99	Erik Soderberg	Sr.

Andrew Owens

Associate Sports Editor



Notre Dame soundly defeated Purdue last weekend and now enters a critical three-game stretch in October spread out over four weekends.

Win all three, and the once far-off BCS hopes are still alive heading into the final month.

Many are already looking ahead to the Oct. 22 date with USC, and that's a mistake. Air Force is an excellent team and runs the same triple option that has given the Irish fits in the past.

Irish coach Brian Kelly won't let his squad look past the Falcons, but still expect a close match between two talented teams. Both running games will have big days Saturday, but it will be Notre Dame who finishes on top by a field goal.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 28, Air Force 25

Chris Masoud

Assistant Managing Editor



Army used to be a football powerhouse and has three national championships to its name. Navy has 19 players in the College Football Hall of Fame. Air Force, not so much.

The academies were once on par with the nation's best, but since have been relegated to college football mediocrity. But this Falcons team is good. They may not be better than Notre Dame, but they have something the Irish lack: chicanery. Running a triple-option attack is one thing, but coupling that with a precise aerial attack is another matter completely. Just watch some highlights of the Falcons offense this season — receivers just aren't supposed to be that open. But Notre Dame has something Air Force lacks: a defense hitting its stride. And Michael Floyd.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 37, Air Force 10

"Rees and Floyd are going to have a field day with the servicemen. They're too athletic. I think our defense will be the best defense they will have come across this season. The triple option and all [those] gadgets, I don't think that's going to work."

Notre Dame 35, Air Force 14

Randy Waldrum,
Notre Dame women's soccer coach



Defense won't change against triple option



Air Force senior quarterback Tim Jefferson leads a prolific triple-option attack that averages over 513 yards per game.

By **ALLAN JOSEPH**
Sports Editor

Recent history at Notre Dame has made "triple option" the equivalent of a four-letter word.

Navy has employed it to perfection far too often for Irish fans, and defense after Notre Dame defense has failed to be disciplined enough to effectively defend the scheme. Hand-wringing abounds over what new wrinkle, if any, defensive coordinator Bob Diaco will install to stop Air Force's option attack. Amid the public worries, the coaching staff has made one thing clear.

"I think we keep doing what we've been doing," Irish coach Brian Kelly said.

"It's no different than any other week," safeties coach Chuck Martin said.

"Really, what do we have to do? Nothing different than we do every week," Diaco said.

While the focus on stopping Air Force's option may seem hard-headed, Kelly said it was more important for his team to continue to win the battle at the line of scrimmage.

"We cannot become so out of character in stopping the option that we forget about the things that we teach every day," Kelly said. "That is playing physical, flying to the football [and] great tackling. We've got to be who we are, and that is being physical on both sides of the ball."

"If you're afraid of that, you're not going to play. We have to be who we are."

The Falcons employ a triple-option attack as their base offense and do so to great effect, ranking third in the nation with 364.5 yards on the ground per game. But in contrast to other triple-option teams like Navy, Air Force has an equally dangerous aerial attack.

"These guys are very proficient passers and receivers," Diaco said. "It's unique. That's why they're one of the best offensive teams in the country."

The Falcons' multifaceted attack begins with and revolves around senior quarterback Tim Jefferson, whose 188.8 quarterback efficiency rating is fourth in the country.

"He can do all the option jobs, but he's also proficient passing," Diaco said. "He can make that

big field throw to a comeback ... which is hard for any quarterback in the country, let alone where you would think you're playing an option quarterback.

"He can make all the throws and he's athletic enough and tough enough to run the offense. It's a unique challenge and they're doing a fantastic job."

Senior linebacker Darius Fleming said the key to neutralizing the Air Force action was familiarity with the offensive scheme he and his defense will face. "I don't think you can over-study. I don't think there's such a thing as too much film this week," Fleming said. "You've got to battle for four quarters, because they've got a great team, and they run this offense really well."

The Falcons run their offense so well, in fact, that Diaco felt it was necessary to temper expectations.

"What's success? People talk about stopping them. You don't stop an offense like this," he said. "Hopefully you can get them off schedule ... If you can get the team off schedule, that's helpful."

While freshmen defensive linemen Stephon Tuitt and Aaron Lynch saw no action against an option-based Michigan team in week two, Diaco said the two would see playing time this week despite their inexperience.

"It isn't going to be perfect," Diaco said. "They're going to do silly stuff at times. We're just going to have to rally and play hard, play with great effort and try to neutralize a lot of those things ... They're doing a better job. Each day that passes, they seem to do better."

According to Kelly, at its core, the matchup between two disparate teams comes down to mental discipline — and if his team is going to win, it has to do what it does best.

"We're big, strong [and] physical," he said. "They're agile, mobile and smart. They play extremely hard. We have to use our attributes and we have to be a physical team. If you fall asleep for one second ... you're going to be in big trouble."

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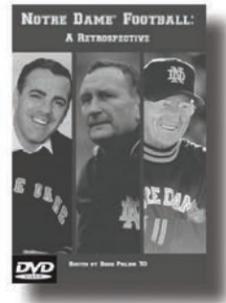
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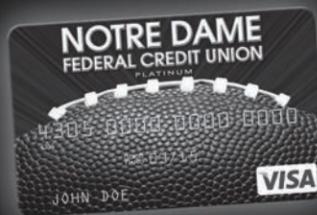
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Players, coaches strive to improve special teams play

By ANDREW OWENS
Associate Sports Editor

A special teams unit can be a forgotten yet crucial aspect of any team. It can provide a game-changing momentum swing when an opponent least expects it. As Notre Dame is finding out in 2011, it can also be crippling.

Through the first five games of this season, the Irish have sputtered in virtually every aspect of special teams play.

"[Special teams are] an emphasis," Irish coach Brian Kelly said. "We're working hard at it. We know it's an area that has to get better, has to improve. But like anything else, we're up late. We're looking at everything. We're examining everything that's being done, every person out there, every player, every scheme."

"There's no hurt feelings here when it comes to special teams. This is raw in a sense that everything has to be examined because we've got to get better there."

Junior receiver Theo Riddick began the season as the starting punt returner but, after two muffed punt returns against South Florida, one of which gave the Bulls three critical points in their 23-20 victory, was replaced by senior receiver John Goodman.

Goodman, chosen for returns due to his sure hands, has displayed anything but ball security during his 2011 stint at the position. His most critical gaffe was a dropped ball inside Notre Dame's own 20-yard line when the Irish

held a precarious 15-point lead over Michigan State in the fourth quarter Sept. 17.

"We've got to make better decisions catching the ball," Irish special teams coach Mike Elston said. "We've got to do a better job of holding on. We got to get guys out so they can run a little bit better and hold up."

In Notre Dame's 38-10 win at Purdue Saturday, Goodman made the decision to let a punt drop and watched as it rolled an extra 15 yards, putting the Irish offense against its own end zone.

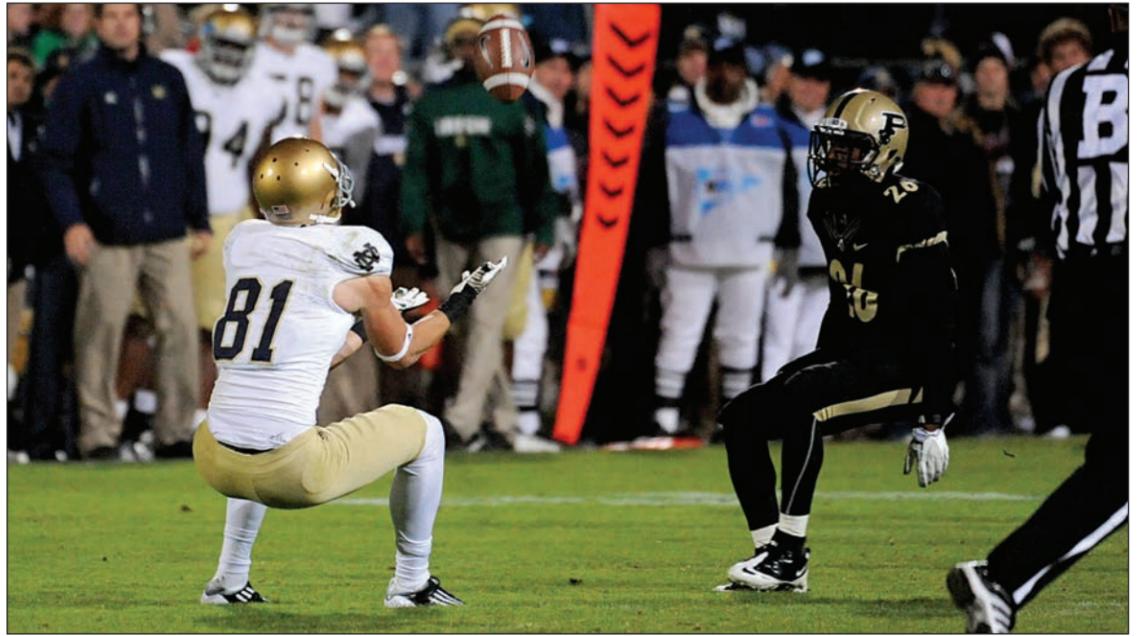
"Purdue had good skill and we didn't really match up well, but we match up better this week with guys we can get out there, so we just got to put better guys on their fast players and try and do a better job of holding up," Elston said.

In a sign that Notre Dame is pulling all tricks out of the bag to improve special teams play, junior punt returner Ben Turk has even punted rugby-style at some points during a slow start to 2011.

The blame for the perplexing start to 2011, however, can be passed evenly between coaches and players, Kelly said.

"We got to coach better, and everyone wants to put it on Mike Elston, but there are six other coaches that are responsible for those teams," he said. "There are lieutenants on each one of those units and each one of them has to be accountable to do a better job. Having said that, I think we all know on the other end [which] players have to play better."

Perhaps most befuddling has



TOM YOUNG/The Observer

Notre Dame senior receiver John Goodman prepares to return a punt during Notre Dame's 38-10 win over Purdue last Saturday. Goodman has struggled with punt returns this season.

been the play of senior kicker David Ruffer. After the former walk-on converted his first 18 attempts before missing his final boot of the 2010 season, he has started 2011 on a 3-of-7 mark. At Purdue, Ruffer missed a 49-yard field goal and had another blocked in the victory.

"On the block, that was on [Ruffer]. He kicked the ball too low," Elston said. "The guy put his hand up and blocked it and that can't happen. He got a little penetration, but not enough to block the kick. On the miss, he struck the ball well, but it just went one

foot outside the upright. It was a 49-yard field goal, so we expect him to make it. That's why we put him out there and he missed it by a foot."

"You've got to try to build his confidence back up..."

The rose among thorns for the Irish has been freshman running back George Atkinson, who took on the role of kick returner in week three. He made a splash as the first Notre Dame freshman kick returner to score since Raghieb Ismail in 1988.

Overall, Kelly said he continues to evaluate the entire unit and

search for a cure to Notre Dame's woes.

"What I really try to do is examine all phases of the game and find out whether it's personnel, whether it's teaching, or simply is it scheme," he said. "I try to break it down in that area. [While] I believe we spend the appropriate time on special teams, we would be a whole lot better if we got better play. That doesn't exonerate the coaches. We're part of that as well. But we need better play."

Contact Andrew Owens at aowens2@nd.edu

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Ian Kuijt, Professor, Department of Anthropology

🌿 10.8.11 (vs. United States Air Force Academy)

"Building Peace in a Violent World: What I've Learned in Five Decades as a Peace Scholar"

Robert C. Johansen, Senior Fellow, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies
Professor, Department of Political Science

🌿 10.22.11 (vs. University of Southern California)

7:30 p.m. game; 4 p.m. lecture

"The Poetic Curve of Nature: Connecting Literature and Science"

Laura Dassow Walls, Professor, Department of English

🌿 10.29.11 (vs. United States Naval Academy)

"The Apartment Plot: Fantasies of Urban Living in American Movies"

Pamela Wojcik, Professor, Department of Film, Television, and Theatre

🌿 11.19.11 (vs. Boston College)

"Change: Why It Happens, Why It Accelerates, and What Might Happen Next"

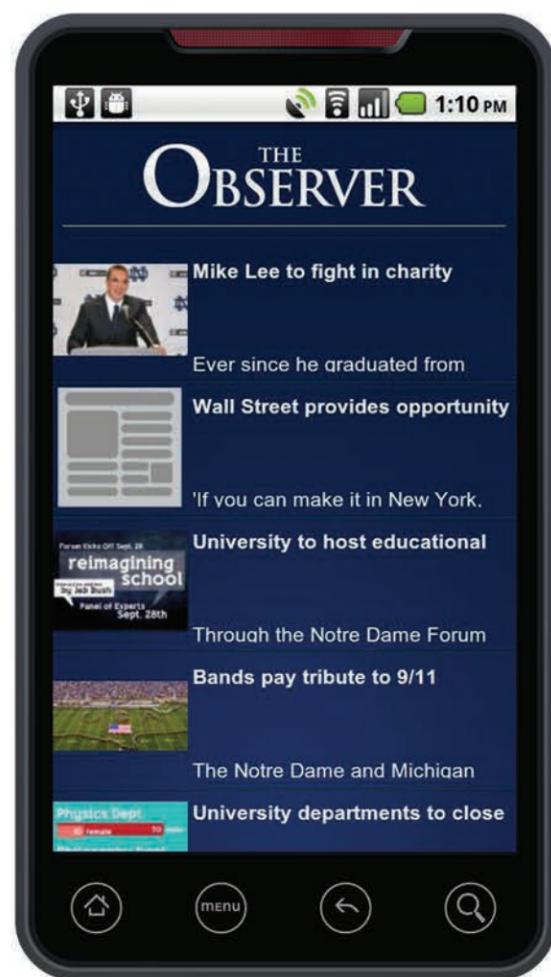
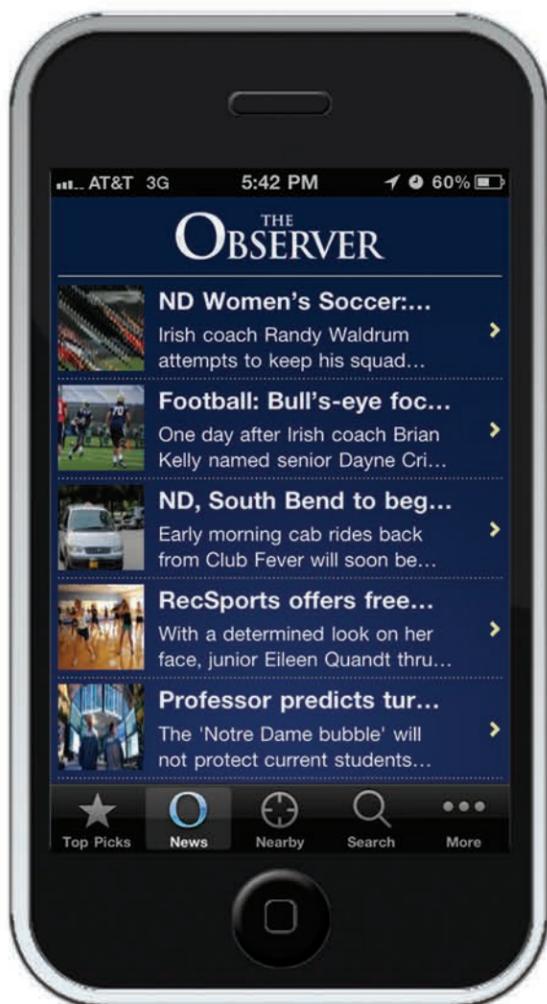
Felipe Fernández-Armesto, Professor, Department of History



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