

# IRISH INSIDER

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THE  
OBSERVER

## The wait is over.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1990—OCTOBER 22, 2011



Photo: Illustration by Pat Coveney, Brandon Keelean and Grant Tobin



## COMMENTARY

# At long last, Irish have upper hand on Trojans

*Editor's note: This week The Observer and The Daily Trojan, the student newspaper at Southern California, teamed up with head-to-head columns addressing one topic: the direction of the rivalry between the two football programs.*

*Observer Associate Sports Editor Andrew Owens lends you his opinions concerning a tilt in Notre Dame's favor, and Daily Trojan Columnist Dave Dulberg argues USC retains its grip, though the fans are the biggest winners.*

Six years ago, No. 9 Notre Dame hosted No. 1 USC in one of the most memorable contests in recent college football memory — a game remembered simply as the 'Bush-Push.'

While the Irish fell in a heart-breaking 34-31 defeat, many viewed the game as evidence of Notre Dame's imminent return to football prominence. First-year Irish coach Charlie Weis seemed to have the program rapidly moving in the right direction and, with the departure of Matt Leinart and Reggie Bush after the 2005 season and Trojans coach Pete Carroll's continued flirtation with the NFL, the end of a tumultuous four-game losing streak to USC was in sight.

Well, not exactly. Carroll delayed the inevitable departure four more years and Weis was ousted at the same time, ending a period of Irish befuddlement in the form of an eight-game losing streak with a 24.5-point average margin of defeat.

Just a few months later, USC was placed on probation, banned from bowl appearances for two years and, most importantly, stripped of 20 scholarships over a two-year period.

Under Irish coach Brian Kelly and Trojans coach Lane Kiffin, a new chapter of the rivalry is unfolding, as the two will be inextricably connected throughout their respective tenures.

Kelly won the first battle between the two, a gritty 20-16 Irish victory that snapped eight years of turmoil and returned the Jeweled Shillelagh to Notre Dame for the first time since the Bob Davie era.

Detractors are quick to point out the Trojans were without their starting quarterback and right tackle in the 20-16 loss. Notre Dame, however, was even thinner in numbers, with a freshman backup quarterback, and backups at running back, tight end, nose guard and linebacker.

Lost in the argument amidst all the injuries is the important point that Kelly and defensive coordinator Bob Diaco bamboozled a talented Trojan offense and its coach, Lane Kiffin, who was hired more for his ability to out-scheme a defense than for

his previous track record as a head coach, which includes a 5-15 mark with the Oakland Raiders and a 7-6 slate in his only season with the University of Tennessee.

The 16 Trojan points were the direct result of four Tommy Rees turnovers in Notre Dame territory. Despite an average starting field position at the 23-yard line following the four turnovers, the Irish defense surrendered only three field goals and a touchdown.

The Notre Dame-USC battle is always a barometer used to determine where each program stands and last year's Irish victory suggests a shift in momentum in the rivalry.

With a gargantuan opportunity in this year's contest, it marks the biggest game for Notre Dame since that fateful October day six years ago. Only this time, the program is much closer to returning to elite status than it was in 2005.

Despite consecutive losses to begin this season, Kelly's plan is working. Players are becoming more comfortable in his system and his recruiting, specifically on the defensive side, has provided this year's unit with depth, not to mention present and future playmakers.

While USC is hampered by a scholarship limit, Notre Dame has the opportunity to reel in its second consecutive top-10 class, and this weekend will go a long way toward attaining that goal, as the Irish host 17 elite prospects on official visits and many more on unofficial visits.

What happens if Notre Dame loses? Well, the rest of the college football world will roll its proverbial eyes and quip that it's simply another false alarm on the 'Return to Glory' claim. Some prospects might not buy into the plan Kelly is preaching.

And if the Irish win? The Trojan fan base becomes further disgruntled with Kiffin's performance, Notre Dame's slim BCS hopes become a bit less slim, and a crop of the most talented high school prospects in the country, many of whom are USC targets, get a front-row seat in an electric atmosphere to the continuation of a new streak in the storied rivalry.

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



Andrew Owens

Associate Sports Editor

## GUEST COMMENTARY

# Trojans still dominate, but the rivalry is changing for the better

LOS ANGELES — Unless I've been sleeping under a rock for the last decade, the question of who still holds a grasp on the coveted "Jeweled Shillelagh" heading into USC and Notre Dame's primetime showdown tomorrow night, requires little to no thought.

USC. There's no bias here or jaded sense of entitlement. The numbers, the wins and the undeniable dominance speak for themselves.

Slice it and dice it anyway you'd like, aside from a rain-soaked 20-16 victory that required more than one fortuitous bounce — a wide open Ronald Johnson dropping what would have been a go-ahead touchdown in the final minutes or then-starting sophomore quarterback Matt Barkley sidelined for the only time in his collegiate career due to a knee injury — the Irish haven't even been playing on the same field as the Trojans since about the end of the Clinton Administration.

Harsh as that might be, heading into last year's literal and figurative Turkey drop at the Coliseum, USC held an eight-game win streak over Notre Dame. And, outside of the historic "Bush Push" in 2005, most of those contests were decided before the bands even took the field for their halftime performances.

Look no further than the 44-13 snoozer of 2002, Matt Leinart's 41-10 pre-Heisman coronation in 2004, the 38-0 Mark Sanchez coming-out party in 2007 and the 38-3 Thanksgiving laughter in 2008.

I know statistics don't always tell the story, but a margin of victory of 24.5 points per game during that span, doesn't require a lifeline for explanation. Sorry, Regis.

One win does not suddenly shift the balance of power in the swinging pendulum that defines this rivalry.

Joe Montana's green jersey heroics in 1977 didn't wash away the Trojans' eight wins from 1974-1982, nor did USC's 1996 victory suddenly alleviate the damage left by Notre Dame during the previous 11 years.

So, why is this current quandary any different?

There is no disregarding the job Brian Kelly has done in his second year at the helm of the Irish program. He has quickly restored the crown jewel of the university, which was a mighty tall task given the lack of life support his predecessors Charlie Weis and Tyrone Willingham provided the program.

But, I think the larger, and perhaps more important question we should be asking, is not who has the bigger fingerprint smudge on the rivalry keepsake, but rather what this game means for two schools caught between the crossroads of what was and what currently is?



Dave Dulberg

Daily Trojan Columnist

Aside from South Bend hosting a night game for the first time since Lou Holtz was calling plays on the Notre Dame Stadium sidelines, this game has a rare air about it none of us have felt for some time.

For a rivalry that began Dec. 4, 1926 thanks to the chatty wives of USC athletic director Gwynn Wilson and famed Irish coach Knute Rockne, the annual matchup stretching over 2,000 miles has sadly gone from riveting to mundane over the last handful of years.

From NCAA sanctions to coaching changes to unfulfilled expectations, two of the country's powerhouse programs have been reduced to national afterthoughts in recent years.

Forgotten nowadays are historic chapters like Rod Sherman's remarkable catch to help the Trojans knock off a No. 1-ranked Irish team in 1964, or the unprecedented ties of 1936 and 1968, or the 24-point comeback by USC at the Coliseum in 1976 en route to a 55-24 victory or Irish kicker John Carney's game-winning field goal as time expired in the closest game between the two in 1986.

Because, while these moments have been forever etched in the lore that holds this rivalry together, the battle for the Jeweled Shillelagh these days has been overshadowed by off-the-field drama and on-the-field disappointments.

Both schools can play the "I'm better" routine until their fan bases go red in the face, but the real joy should come in knowing that the rivalry as we once knew it, is back tomorrow night, because slowly but surely, both programs are making strides in the right direction at the same time.

That isn't to say what we will witness on the foot-high grass Saturday night are two teams battling for national supremacy. Both teams still have plenty of issues to address, from Tommy Rees' growing pains to the tailback carousel currently taking place in USC's backfield.

So, on the surface it's a standard non-conference matchup between fringe top-25 teams, but for those who have witnessed the highest of highs and lowest of lows of this storied rivalry, 2011 serves as the resurrection point. With a nationally televised performance highlighted by pro prospects Robert Woods, Matt Barkley, Michael Floyd and Manti Te'o, there is no debate that the pride of this historic series will certainly be on display this weekend.

It's the kind of clash Pat Haden, Lynn Swann, Howard Jones, Frank Leahy, Paul Hornung, Joe Theismann and Tim Brown would all sit back and smile about.

So let me rephrase my opening thought. We all are the real winners from this year's USC-Notre Dame rivalry game.

Whether you bleed blue and gold or cardinal and gold, the real jewel trophy we all can get our hands on, is a rivalry restored.

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# Notre Dame unveils helmet changes

By DOUGLAS FARMER  
Editor-in-Chief

Whether or not the Irish wear their green jerseys Saturday, fans will have a uniform change to buzz about. Notre Dame's traditional gold helmets are now more, well, gold.

"We've been frustrated with the helmet and it just has never gotten to the right color," Kelly said Wednesday. "We want it to be the golden dome."

For decades student managers have spray-painted the helmets before each game. Now, the managers will only inspect the helmets, removes scuffs

and clean them. Nonetheless, the paint on the helmets will continue to have 23.9 karat gold flakes removed from the Main Building.

The helmets' finish is much shinier than the former helmets, and Kelly insists the new finish will shine through Saturday night.

"We've already had it under an HD camera and it looks terrific," he said. "We think it's the

right look ... Maintain the tradition of our uniform with the right gold helmet."

The helmets will also have a decal honoring Xavier Murphy, a senior manager for the team in 2010 and an intern with the team this year.

"It was a sad day for us," Kelly said the day of Murphy's death, Oct. 11. "There are a lot of heavy hearts today."

The green shamrock decal has an "X" in the middle of it, and will be worn for the rest of the season.

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Photo Courtesy MATT CASHORE/Notre Dame Athletics

Senior captain Harrison Smith models the new helmet paint scheme.



# Hit the lights

More than two decades later, dramatic echoes of its last night game still ring in Notre Dame Stadium

By DOUGLAS FARMER  
Editor-in-Chief

When Rick Mirer found Adrian Jarrell in the end zone for the winning score over Michigan on Sept. 15, 1990, nobody thought Notre Dame would wait 21 years, one month and seven days to host another night game.

In fact, the majority of current undergraduates were born after Mirer's fourth quarter heroics under the lights in his first start.

The wait is over.

Tomorrow night Notre Dame will take the field at Notre Dame Stadium to add another chapter to its rivalry with Southern California, just as the Irish did in 2005, 2007 and 2009.

This time, there will just happen to be lights on from before the warm-ups to after the post-game Alma Mater, just as there were for Mirer.

"Honestly, it's kind of hard to believe ... it's been that long," Mirer said. "Under the lights is just kind of a bigger stage. I think a lot of guys would agree."

When the Irish, led by their sophomore quarterback and his sophomore target, Jarrell, took the field 21 years ago, playing a night game was not all that out-of-the-ordinary. "It wasn't a big deal," said Mirer, who finished the 28-24 victory with 165 yards and one touchdown. "We played at night at other places."

Even the players who, like Mirer, had not yet played much in their careers had played under the lights before in high school, a sentiment even more true of this year's team.

"It kind of takes you back to your high school days," said Reggie Brooks, a sophomore in 1990, when he intercepted

Michigan quarterback Elvis Grbac's final pass attempt. "You always played Friday nights around 7:00. It had a high school feel to it to some degree, but there was a different vibe from an atmosphere standpoint playing under the lights.

"It was kind of like playing 'Monday Night Football' at the professional level. There was certainly a little more to it than just another game."

Mirer and the Irish offense started strong against the Wolverines that long-ago evening, but Michigan held a 24-21 lead with only 4:33 remaining when Notre Dame took over at its own 24. Nine plays, 76 yards and 2:53 later, the Mirer-to-Jarrell pass provided the winning margin.

"When they turn the lights on the field in sports, it kind of adds excitement," Jarrell said. "Football is already exciting, and Notre Dame football is already exciting, but playing at night creates an extra aura. Everybody gets a little extra-hyped for the game."

In 1990, Notre Dame's next three home games all began at noon, a full nine hours earlier than the Michigan encounter. The lack of activity throughout the afternoon and evening led to some anxiety in the team hotel, Jarrell said.

"You go stir-crazy sitting in the hotel," he said. "Instead of checking out first thing in the morning, you're there all day ... You try not to watch too many games of other teams playing, but you have to peek at them. Nervous energy can make you tired. You're going to be watching those games for eight hours."

While today's Irish are accustomed to 3:30 p.m. kick-offs, the four-and-a-half hour wait will still pose many of the same challenges Jarrell's and

Brooks' nine-hour wait did.

"It takes a little bit of an adjustment," Brooks said. "There is some level of discomfort you could say, not having played at that time. Most athletes are creatures of habit, so it throws your scheduling off more than anything else."

Even if schedules are thrown off and habits disrupted, the consensus among the last 20 years of Irish players is they would have loved to enjoy the night game atmosphere.

"I'm jealous," said Golden Tate, Irish receiver from 2007-09. "I'm jealous they get to play at night against SC. It sucks that I didn't get to experience that. I wish I could have played in it."

Tate's former teammates feel the same way. Tom Zbikowski (2003-07) was a pivotal player in the 2005 encounter with USC, returning a punt for a touchdown shortly before halftime.

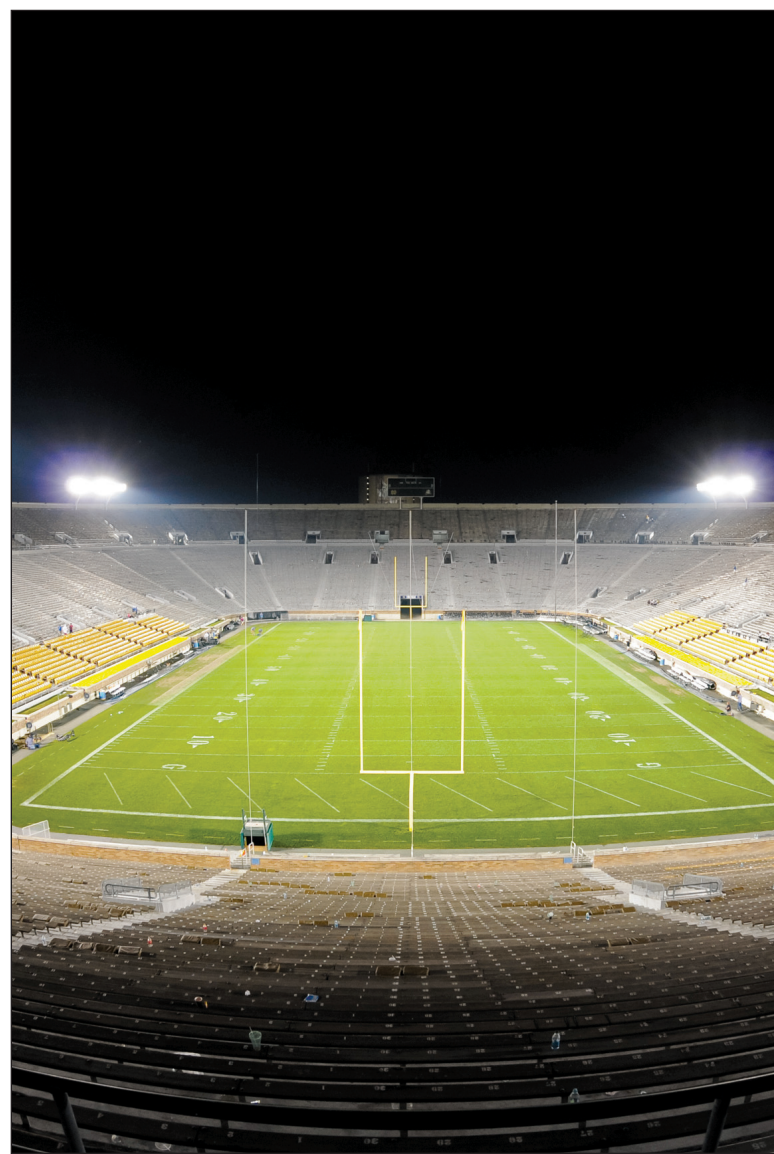
"It should be fun," Zbikowski said of the return to the prime-time hour. "We've been looking for a night game at Notre Dame for quite some time. It's a good audience, a good stage for a university to be on Saturday night."

Even Irish senior captain and safety Harrison Smith — the same Harrison Smith who sealed last year's victory over USC with an interception in the closing seconds a la Brooks in 1990 against Michigan — didn't hide his excitement for the first night game in more than two decades.

"It's the kind of an environment that you never see at Notre Dame, a night game," Smith said at a Wednesday press conference. "[The fans] are going to be, I don't know, pretty rowdy I think."

Sitting next to Smith was junior linebacker Manti Te'o. Four years ago, Te'o was expected to sign with USC. Te'o himself expected to sign with USC. But when National Signing Day came around, Te'o changed his mind that morning and committed to Notre Dame instead.

"I told the story a lot of times," Te'o said. "I was going to go to USC. I prayed about it. I was directed here. I think that



GRANT TOBIN/The Observer

Saturday's contest will mark the first time Notre Dame Stadium hosts a night game since Sept. 15, 1990.

was the only thing that could persuade me to come here. I was all sold on USC. I grew up a USC fan."

But now, Te'o will take the field under the lights to face the Trojans for the third time in his career.

"It's something new," he said. "It's something that I'm looking forward to. It's something all the guys are looking forward to."

Perhaps the fresh nature of the night game is why the players, past and present, are so excited about the opportunity.

"Clearly our players are looking forward to being that one game at night at Notre Dame Stadium," Irish coach Brian

Kelly said. "They haven't experienced anything, so this is a first-time experience. You know, like anybody else, they love those first-time experiences."

As usual, NBC will air the home game, but even the broadcaster is not treating the occasion as a normal one. An NBC spokesman said there will be about 20 cameras at the game, including a blimp, three slow-motion cameras and one in the student section.

The camera in the student section should have some interesting shots if Mirer's expectations are correct.

"For the fans, the gameday activities and preparation and all that, that affects the fans a lot more than it does the players," Mirer said. "There is more of a buzz, more of a buildup, thanks to the length of the day."

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SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

Fans reenter Notre Dame Stadium as the Irish warm up after a two-and-a-half hour weather delay at halftime of Notre Dame's 23-20 loss to South Florida on Sept. 3. The contest would be later interrupted by another weather delay in the fourth quarter.



**IRISH PASSING**

Irish coach Brian Kelly added a wrinkle to the Notre Dame passing attack in the 59-33 win over Air Force when sophomore quarterback Andrew Hendrix debuted. Hendrix, a dual threat quarterback complementing the immobile Tommy Rees, completed all four passes he threw for 33 yards and rushed for a team-high 111 yards.

Rees had his best statistical performance in a Notre Dame uniform against Air Force, completing 23-of-32 passes for 261 yards and four touchdowns. Junior receiver Theo Riddick was very involved in the gameplan, receiving nine touches for 97 yards and a touchdown. Junior tight end Tyler Eifert added eight catches for 81 yards and a touchdown.

Through week seven, USC ranked 105th in the country in pass defense, yielding an average of 272 yards through the air per contest. In its 48-41 win over Arizona on Oct. 1, the Trojan pass defense was torched for 425 yards and four touchdowns against its two starting sophomore cornerbacks.

**IRISH RUSHING**

Junior running back Cierre Wood and senior Jonas Gray have become one of the most dynamic tandems in the country and in recent Notre Dame history. In the 4-2 Irish start, the two have combined for 1,045 yards and 10 touchdowns. If Notre Dame can effectively run the ball early against the stout Trojan rush defense, which ranks 31st in the nation, it will open up the passing game against a struggling USC secondary.

USC must also prepare for Hendrix after his 111-yard rushing effort against Air Force. Kelly is likely to use the sophomore in the same capacity as he did in the win over Air Force and limit his exposure to USC.

Sophomore linebacker Dion Bailey is the Trojans' leading tackler and is key to stopping Wood and Gray from reaching the corners and spreading the field. In order to contain Notre Dame's speedy running backs, the Trojans might move a safety up to slow down the Irish attack.

**IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING**

Kelly and offensive coordinator Charley Molnar strategically introduced Hendrix as an added offensive weapon in the blowout win over Air Force, giving USC one more player to worry about while preparing for the Irish.

If the offensive gameplan can open up running lanes for Wood and Gray early, Rees will have the opportunity to take advantage of the Trojan pass defense with the play action. With all the talent featured on the USC offense, Notre Dame knows each possession is valuable in order to pick up its fifth consecutive win.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

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

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

**IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS**

Notre Dame had by far its best special teams performance in 2011 in the win over Air Force. No missed field goals, botched punts or miscues in the return game helped the Irish cruise.

Senior receiver Michael Floyd saw limited action as a punt returner in the victory, fair catching the ball each time. His athletic ability could provide excellent field position for the Irish, or even a score in a game that should be tightly contested.

**EDGE: EVEN**

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

**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	(W, 59-33)
Oct. 22	USC	
Oct. 29	Navy	
Nov. 5	@ Wake Forest	
Nov. 12	Maryland	
Nov. 19	Boston College	
Nov. 26	@ Stanford	

**Notre Dame Specialists**

<b>PK</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>David Ruffer</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Ben Turk</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
<b>LS</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>Ryan Kavanagh</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>60</b>	<b>Jordan Cowart</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
<b>PR</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>John Goodman</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>3</b>	<b>Michael Floyd</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
<b>KR</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>George Atkinson</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
	<b>28</b>	<b>Austin Collinsworth</b>	<b>So.</b>
<b>KO</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Kyle Brindza</b>	<b>Fr.</b>

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

<b>CB</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Robert Blanton</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>23</b>	<b>Lo Wood</b>	<b>So.</b>

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

<b>CB</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Gary Gray</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>2</b>	<b>Bennett Jackson</b>	<b>So.</b>

# Head-to

## Notre Dame Offense

<b>WR</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>TJ Jones</b>	<b>So.</b>
	<b>16</b>	<b>DaVaris Daniels</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
<b>WR</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Theo Riddick</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	<b>9</b>	<b>Robby Toma</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
<b>LT</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>Zack Martin</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	<b>72</b>	<b>Nick Martin</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
<b>LG</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>Chris Watt</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	<b>76</b>	<b>Andrew Nuss</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>Braxton Cave</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>57</b>	<b>Mike Golic Jr.</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
<b>RG</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>Trevor Robinson</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>65</b>	<b>Conor Hanratty</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
<b>RT</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>Taylor Dever</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>74</b>	<b>Christian Lombard</b>	<b>So.</b>
<b>TE</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>Tyler Eifert</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	<b>18</b>	<b>Ben Koyack</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
<b>WR</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Michael Floyd</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>81</b>	<b>John Goodman</b>	<b>Sr.</b>

## Notre Dame Defense

<b>CB</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Robert Blanton</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>23</b>	<b>Lo Wood</b>	<b>So.</b>
<b>OLB</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Darius Fleming</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>46</b>	<b>Steve Filer</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
<b>DE</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>Ethan Johnson</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>19</b>	<b>Aaron Lynch</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
<b>NG</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Louis Nix</b>	<b>So.</b>
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<b>OLB</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>Prince Shembo</b>	<b>So.</b>
	<b>56</b>	<b>Troy Niklas</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
<b>CB</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Gary Gray</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	<b>2</b>	<b>Bennett Jackson</b>	<b>So.</b>

Predictions

**Allan Joseph**

Sports Editor



Considering USC isn't nearly as good as it was just a few years ago, Notre Dame's biggest challenge in this game is going to be focusing on the task at hand. The hoopla around this game is disproportionate considering this a matchup of two unranked teams — but the atmosphere should be nothing short of unbelievable. That said, once the first kickoff hits the night air, all that disappears. The game is decided on the field — where the Irish are much, much better.

Matt Barkley and Robert Woods may have quite the connection, but Tommy Rees has Michael Floyd as just one weapon in a potent receiving corps. The Notre Dame pass rush will have a field day against the inconsistent Trojan offensive line. But it's a rivalry game, and it'll be close. Just not close enough for the Trojans to win.

**FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 38, USC 31**

**Douglas Farmer**

Editor-in-Chief



I want y'all to see this ... I want you to see everything ... All of the lights.

Oh, don't act like you thought I'd use any other song. As horrible as Kanye's latest hit is, it is pertinent this week for two reasons. One, well, see the cover of this Insider. Two, it is time for us all to see this: Notre Dame beating USC at home.

Most around this campus don't talk about 2005. 2007 may as well not have happened. I stood on the sideline, staring down the line of scrimmage, on fourth-and-four in 2009.

So yes, that is my analysis. It's time to see this. It's time for the Irish to show this.

Then again, the best time all weekend will be at 12:38 Saturday afternoon outside of Alumni Hall.

**FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 27, USC 13**

**Eric Prister**

Senior Sports Writer



Records can be thrown out. Past performances don't matter. In the first night game in Notre Dame Stadium in two decades against heated rival USC, what should happen and what will happen aren't even in the same area code.

The Irish have had two weeks to prepare, and Brian Kelly will have his team schematically prepared. But schematic preparation and mental readiness haven't always gone hand-in-hand this season, and with emotions higher in this game than any other, Notre Dame will need to be focused and ready to play.

But the Irish should be able to score — they haven't really struggled to move the ball against anyone this season — and that means it will be up to the defense to seal the victory.

**FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 31, USC 30**



# o-Head

## USC Defense

<b>CB</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Nickell Robey</b>	<b>So.</b>
	16	Anthony Brown	Fr.
<b>OLB</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Dion Bailey</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
	53	Marquis Simmons	So.
<b>DE</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>Wes Horton</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	42	Devon Kennard	Jr.
<b>DT</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>DaJohn Harris</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	90	George Uko	Fr.
<b>NT</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Christian Tupou</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	98	DaJohn Harris	Sr.
<b>DE</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Nick Perry</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	81	Kevin Greene	So.
<b>OLB</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Chris Galippo</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
	55	Lamar Dawson	Fr.
<b>CB</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Torin Harris</b>	<b>So.</b>
	34	Tony Burnett	Jr.

## USC OFFENSIVE COACHING

Trojans coach Lane Kiffin will attempt to get the running game going early, otherwise the offense will become one-dimensional and possibly lead Barkley to force some throws to his receivers.

If Tyler and McNeal are involved early, the offense will be able to utilize the play-action pass and involve Woods more heavily. With Notre Dame poised to put up a lot of points on the scoreboard, the Trojans will try to make it a shootout.

**EDGE: EVEN**

## USC RUSHING

If the Trojans are going to defeat Notre Dame on the road, they will need to rush the ball effectively. Last year, the Irish held USC to just 80 yards rushing, and Notre Dame has continued to stop the run in 2011. Although Air Force rushed for 363 yards Oct. 8, the Irish defense held the Falcons' running backs out of the end zone for much of the contest and forced a turnover.

Junior linebacker Manti Te'o leads the Irish with 59 tackles, eight-and-a-half tackles for loss and four sacks in six games. He anchors the talented Irish rush defense as the unit attempts to hold another talented rushing attack at bay.

Senior Marc Tyler and junior Curtis McNeal lead the Trojan rushing attack, which ranks 77th in the nation. USC has only scored four rushing touchdowns this season, one of which came from junior quarterback Matt Barkley. Tyler is the primary back for the Trojans, but McNeal is averaging 7.0 yards per rush on 41 carries this season.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

## USC PASSING

The Trojans have one of the most dynamic passing connections in the nation in junior quarterback Matt Barkley and receiver Robert Woods. The sophomore has been on the receiving end of 60 Barkley passes for 783 yards and six touchdowns. Freshman receiver Marquise Lee ranks second on the team with 25 receptions for 404 yards and four touchdowns.

The Irish secondary has been much improved since the second-half of the loss to Michigan, which is due in large part to the strong play of senior cornerback Robert Blanton and the improved performance of senior cornerback Gary Gray. Notre Dame will attempt to pressure Barkley like it did to Mitch Mustain in 2010. If the Irish can slow down Woods from his typical pace thus far in 2011, Barkley will be forced to get secondary receivers involved.

Notre Dame's front seven has been explosive in various parts of the 2011 campaign, and has forced turnovers in key spots. The depth of the defense allows the unit to stay fresh deep into the game.

**EDGE: USC**

<b>FS</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>Jawanza Starling</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	24	Demetrius Wright	So.
	<b>10</b>	<b>Hayes Pullard</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
	23	Shane Horton	Sr.
<b>SS</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>T.J. McDonald</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	19	Drew McAllister	Jr.

## USC Offense

<b>WR</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Robert Woods</b>	<b>So.</b>
	19	Brice Butler	Jr.
<b>TE</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>Xavier Grimble</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
	82	Randall Telfer	Fr.
<b>RT</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>Kevin Graf</b>	<b>So.</b>
	73	David Garness	Jr.
<b>RG</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>John Martinez</b>	<b>So.</b>
	70	Aundrey Walker	Fr.
<b>C</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>Khaled Holmes</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	59	John Martinez	So.
<b>LG</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>Marcus Martin</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
	74	Jeremy Galten	Jr.
<b>LT</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>Matt Kalil</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
	76	Nathan Guertier	Fr.
<b>WR</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Marquise Lee</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
	80	Brandon Carswell	Sr.

## USC SPECIAL TEAMS

Freshman kicker Andre Heidari has been nearly perfect for the Trojans in 2011, converting seven-of-eight attempts, including a long of 47 yards.

Senior punter Kyle Negrete has been mediocre this season, averaging 37.4 yards per punt and downing seven punts inside the 20-yard line.

Woods is also USC's primary kick returner and displays some of the same explosiveness in that capacity as he does at the receiver position.

**EDGE: USC**

## USC Specialists

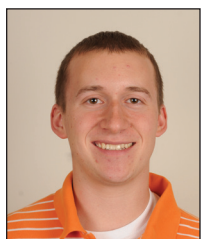
<b>PK</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Andre Heidari</b>	<b>Fr.</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>Kyle Negrete</b>	<b>Jr.</b>
<b>LS</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Chris Pousson</b>	<b>Sr.</b>
<b>PR</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Nickell Robey</b>	<b>So.</b>
<b>KR</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Robert Woods</b>	<b>So.</b>
<b>KO</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Andre Heidari</b>	<b>Fr.</b>

## USC SCHEDULE

- Sept. 3 Minnesota (W, 19-17)
- Sept. 10 Utah (W, 23-14)
- Sept. 17 Syracuse (W, 38-17)
- Sept. 24 @ Arizona State (L, 43-22)
- Oct. 1 Arizona (W, 48-41)
- Oct. 13 @ California (W, 30-9)
- Oct. 22 @ Notre Dame
- Oct. 29 Stanford
- Nov. 4 @ Colorado
- Nov. 12 Washington
- Nov. 19 @ Oregon
- Nov. 26 UCLA

### Andrew Owens

Associate Sports Editor



First home night game in 21 years. BCS aspirations still alive. 17 official visits from blue-chip prospects.

Yeah, this weekend means a lot to Notre Dame.

While this is not the intimidating crew that former Trojans coach Pete Carroll led just a few years ago, USC is still very talented. Junior quarterback Matt Barkley and receiver Robert

Woods form the best passing duo in the country and present a formidable challenge for the Irish secondary.

However, the effect of having a bye week prior to this game should not be overlooked. Irish coach Brian Kelly is 12-1 after a bye week during his coaching career, which includes last year's 28-3 win over Utah.

With two weeks to prepare, Kelly undoubtedly left no stone unturned and it will show in an Irish victory.

**FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 31, USC 24**

### Chris Masoud

Assistant Managing Editor



Two years ago, Pete Carroll and freshman quarterback Matt Barkley strolled into South Bend and tallied the Trojans' eighth straight victory over Notre Dame. After exorcising their demons on Trojan soil last year, the Irish welcome a seasoned vet in Barkley and second-year coach Lane Kiffin with the opportunity to start a streak that finally favors Notre Dame.

Saturday night will be everything the loss to Michigan was to Wolverine fans. The first night game in 21 years, the debut of the stunning gold helmets and an opportunity to reclaim the national spotlight alone make this a must-watch contest. The two teams match up evenly. The USC defense and premier receiver Robert Woods should keep the game tight to the very end. But with Carroll gone, I give the edge to Kelly and his staff in a game that may come down to one bold move.

**FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 31, USC 24**

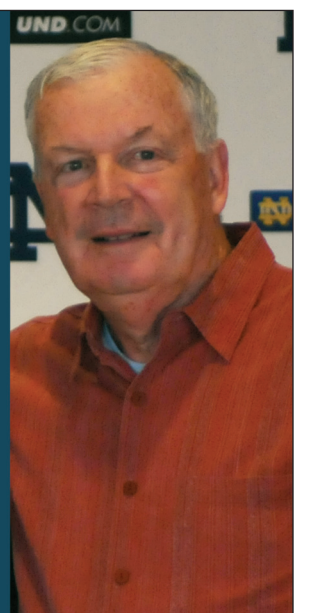
### Digger Phelps

Former Notre Dame basketball coach and ESPN analyst

"I think [there will be a] second-half explosion in the fourth quarter for Notre Dame."

**Notre Dame 28, USC 21**

see more celebrity predictions on page 7





## FOOTBALL RECRUITING

## Notre Dame prepares for highly touted recruits

By ALLAN JOSEPH  
Sports Editor

With a four-game winning streak and any last BCS hopes on the line, Saturday's contest against the Trojans is vitally important to Notre Dame's 2011 season. But with nearly 50 recruits from the 2012 and 2013 classes visiting campus on official and unofficial visits this weekend, the game might mean just as much to the future of Irish football. Not only is the crop of recruits large, but it might be the most talented group Notre Dame has ever hosted, Irish recruiting expert Mike Frank said.

"This is by far the most impressive list of recruits that I can ever remember coming in for one weekend," said Frank, who runs the ESPN-affiliated Irish Sports Daily. "You essentially have 10 top-150 players coming, and that just doesn't happen."

While 14 players already committed to Notre Dame are taking unofficial and official visits for the prime-time contest, Irish coach Brian Kelly and his staff will focus on a number of high-profile uncommitted players who can fill Notre Dame's remaining needs on the offensive line and at skill positions, Frank said.

Washington tackle Zach Banner and California lineman Arik Armstead highlight the linemen visiting campus, Frank said.

"Banner is a massive kid. It's all good size, too," Frank said. "His best football is one or two years down the road when he grows into his body."

"Armstead is a big, big kid, and he's very athletic. Notre Dame really likes him at the defensive end position."

The 6-foot 8-inch Armstead has also expressed interest in playing basketball at the college level, and Frank said the Irish will have no problem with Armstead doing that.

"I think Notre Dame's staff is fine with him playing basketball as long as he's academically eligible and doing well in both football and academics," Frank said. "I don't see it being a problem at all. He's quite the talent and can really help both programs."

Illinois offensive tackle Jordan Diamond will take his unofficial visit this weekend, and while Michigan currently leads the race for Diamond, Frank said the Irish will have a good shot at luring Diamond away.

"He's probably, I would say, the best offensive tackle in the Midwest," Frank said. "I think it will be interesting to see what he thinks about the game and hanging out with the players. I know he's a guy they liked very early and offered very early."

Notre Dame will also attempt to sign California running back Byron Marshall and North Carolina running back Keith Marshall (no relation) to complement already-signed Ohio running back Will Mahone, who is also visiting this weekend.

"Byron Marshall's probably the best running back on the West Coast," Frank said. "There are a lot of good athletes playing running back, but he's just a really good running back."

"Keith Marshall is probably a little faster ... He's maybe a little bit more explosive, but not quite as big. He will certainly fit a role."

In addition to both Marshalls and Mahone, all-purpose athlete Keivarae Russell will visit campus.

"He's one of those guys who, when you throw the ball in his face, he just makes things happen," Frank said. "He's just a really explosive player — the kind Notre Dame hasn't had in a while, a guy who can make a lot of people miss."

While Notre Dame has filled a

number of its defensive needs, the Irish will host Ohio linebacker Ifeadi Odenigbo, who, despite having very little experience in organized football, is highly touted by Frank. "You just can't pass up on Ifeadi. He's just extremely athletic," Frank said. "He's just a great athlete in a big man's body already."

"Most people think he'll come down to Stanford, Northwestern and Notre Dame ... When we talk about big-game atmosphere, that's what's going to give Notre Dame the edge over the other schools."

California running back Ishmael Adams, whom Frank calls "highly underrated," and California safety Shaq Thompson highlight the uncommitted defensive backs who will visit this weekend.

"[Thompson] is probably one of the most athletic guys in the country," Frank said. "If you get him, you're doing really well, because he can really change a lot of things and really make teams prepare around him because he can be so destructive on defense and offense."

In addition to a number of uncommitted players, the Irish will also host four players who have verbally committed to other schools but continue to express interest in Notre Dame. Florida offensive lineman John Theus, committed to Georgia, leads that group, and Frank is not surprised that Theus continues to draw interest.

"He's got great size, he's a strong kid who can run- and pass-block well and he moves well," Frank said. "He's just a guy that you know you're going to count on when you bring him in, and that's why he's so coveted. I'd be very surprised if he didn't pan out wherever he goes." Florida cornerback Donaldven Manning, while committed to Virginia Tech, has continued to develop a relationship with Irish wide receivers coach Tony Alford and thus is taking his official visit this weekend. "He's really intrigued by Notre Dame ... and I think he just really wants to check out Notre Dame and make sure he's not passing up an opportunity," Frank said. "I have a feeling he's really going to like it at Notre Dame."

Florida cornerback Brian Poole, California wide receiver Jordan Payton and California receiver Bryce Treggs will also visit Notre Dame besides being interested in other schools.

"[Poole] has been a guy they liked a lot initially. He's very, very high on that board," Frank said. "[Payton] is a really good receiver, an explosive player with great hands."

"I really like Bryce Treggs because he's one of those guys that just seems to outperform his physical gifts, and that's no slight on him because he's a good player."

With so many players visiting, Frank said it was tough to pinpoint which player would be most important.

"I wouldn't say there are two players that are important — it's more like 10," he said.

*For a full list of players taking visits this weekend, visit ndsmcobserver.com*

*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.*

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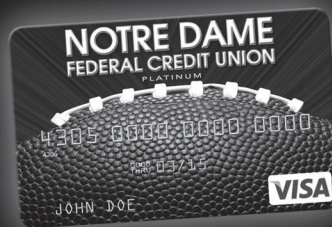
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# Celebrity Predictions

## Rick Mirer

Former Notre Dame quarterback (1989–1992)  
Made his first start in Notre Dame's last home night game in 1990

"I feel real good about our guys. It hasn't really been that way in this matchup for awhile, but I think we have a real good streak going now at four in a row. I think we can score a bunch of points."

Notre Dame 35, USC 10

## Adrian Jarrell

Former Notre Dame receiver (1989–1992)  
Scored the game-winning touchdown in Notre Dame's last home night game in 1990

"Our defense has been playing well. We've had a few turnovers here and there, but I have confidence in us."

Notre Dame 35, USC 21

## Reggie Brooks

Former Notre Dame running back and cornerback (1989–1992)  
Sealed the Notre Dame victory in the last home night game with a late interception

"I don't pick scoring but I will pick the Irish for the victory. I do believe we have a stronger running game than they do."

## Golden Tate

Former Notre Dame receiver (2007–2009)  
"I think if we can go in there and execute the plan, it seems like every week Notre Dame has a great plan, so we just need to execute the plan and stay away from turnovers. If we do that we can definitely win and I think we have playmakers with Tyler [Eifert], Cierre [Wood], Jonas [Gray] and Michael Floyd. I think if they double Floyd it means it's going to open up for the slot guys and Tyler Eifert, so I'm interested to see how that plays out."

Notre Dame 27, USC 24

## Kyle McCarthy

Former Notre Dame safety (2005–2009)  
"I don't have a final score, since I haven't followed USC that closely this year, but I think Notre Dame's definitely going to pull out a victory."

## Tom Zbikowski

Former Notre Dame safety (2003–2007)  
"I'm taking Notre Dame on this one. I got my friendly wagers on this one to various university people, so I'm looking for a big win. I got no point spread, as long as we win by one I really don't care."



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