

# IRISH INSIDER

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Notre Dame 14, Stanford 28

## Flat finale

*Irish close out regular season 8-4 with lackluster performance against Stanford*

By CHRIS MASOUD  
Assistant Managing Editor

STANFORD, Calif. — In 2009, it was Toby Gerhart's three touchdown runs. In 2011, it was Andrew Luck's four touchdown passes.

In two of the past three seasons, Notre Dame has walked off the field of Stanford Stadium in defeat at the hands of a Heisman Trophy hopeful. The Irish fell to the Cardinal 28-14 Saturday, marking the third consecutive loss to Stanford.

"[I'm] disappointed that we didn't come here and get a victory," Irish coach Brian Kelly said. "We didn't come here to get second prize. We came here to get a win. Nobody in that locker room is happy with the outcome. We got off to a slow start and battled against it, kept playing, kept competing. To me, the scoreboard showed 28-14 and that's not good enough, but I love the heart of our team."

Entering the contest as the No. 6 ranked team in the nation, the Cardinal (11-1, 8-1 PAC-12) throttled then-No. 22 Notre Dame (8-4), holding the Irish to just 57 yards on the ground and 309 yards of total offense. Junior quarterback Tommy Rees completed just six of 13 passes for 60 yards, threw an interception and lost a fumble as Stanford contained the Irish attack to a meager 75 yards of total offense in the first half.

Kelly replaced Rees with sophomore quarterback Andrew Hendrix to start the second half. Hendrix finished 11 of 24 through the air for 192 yards and one touchdown, adding 20 more yards and a touchdown on the ground.

"Obviously [Hendrix] can run the ball a little bit," Kelly said. "He's a change of pace in the sense that we haven't seen that all year. That's not Tommy's strength. We needed to run the quarterback a little bit, and he did some of that. We have a long way to go, and we'll evaluate all those things at a later time. We're just trying to win a football game."

Notre Dame's recurring quarterback woes were a contrast to the consistent performance of Stanford quarterback Andrew Luck, who



THOMAS LA/The Observer

**Stanford senior quarterback Andrew Luck stiff arms Notre Dame freshman linebacker Ishaq Williams during the Cardinal's 28-14 victory over the Irish on Saturday. Luck threw for 233 yards and four touchdowns in the win.**

finished Saturday's contest with 233 yards on 20 for 30 passing and four touchdowns. The senior quarterback continued to build his case for the Heisman Trophy, eclipsing

former Stanford quarterback and NFL Hall of Famer John Elway's record of 77 career touchdowns passes with the 80th touchdown throw of his career.

"We were all excited as a secondary [to face Luck]," Irish senior safety Harrison Smith said. "It's always good to go against the best."

Like the season-opening loss to South Florida, the season finale was a tale of two halves. Hendrix' insertion sparked an Irish offense that outscored the Cardinal 14 to 7 in the second half on 234 yards to the Cardinal's 142.

Notre Dame found the end zone on its second drive af-

ter the break. Hendrix connected with junior tight end Tyler Eifert on passes of 14 and 24 yards, moving the Irish to their own 44-yard line. The sophomore picked up 25 yards of his own on the ground before finding senior receiver Michael Floyd on a six-yard strike to pull the Irish within 14.

Eifert finished with 79 yards on four catches, becoming the fifth tight end in Notre Dame history to eclipse 1,000 yards receiving in a single season. Floyd tallied 92 yards and the lone touchdown on eight catches, setting a new school record with 95 total receptions on the season and extending his career touchdown receptions record to 36.

"I think we all realized we had to step it up," Floyd said. "We knew our role behind, and we had to do something about it. Coach told us to step it up, and I think the guys had a lot of courage knowing that the game wasn't over and that we still had to compete."

But the Irish failed to score on their next four drives, trading touchdowns with the Car-

dinal in the fourth quarter. Luck completed a 55-yard toss to tight end Coby Fleener to push the lead to 28-7 with just under six minutes remaining in the game. Two drives later, Hendrix responded with a touchdown drive of his own, rushing into the end zone on a two-yard run that took just 43 seconds off the clock.

Notre Dame failed to recover the ensuing onside kick, and Stanford ran out the clock to end the 2011 regular season.

"We didn't start how we wanted to," senior linebacker Darius Fleming said. "You can't do that against a talented team like Stanford, and it hurt us. We picked it up a lot in the second half, but we just couldn't recover."

As Notre Dame prepares for a bowl game selection and its final contest of the season, Kelly said "anything is possible" regarding who will take the first snaps under center.

"Coach Kelly called my number and I did everything I could to help this team win," Hendrix said Saturday. "Obviously we came up a little short. I made some plays, I

missed some plays. We're just going to go back to the film room Monday and see what I did well and what I didn't do so well."

Despite falling for the fourth time this season, the combined winning percentage of Notre Dame's opponents in those losses (South Florida, Michigan, USC and Stanford) is a staggering .766. Kelly said his team's willingness to battle to the end will be the most important takeaway from Saturday's loss.

"We got off to a slow start, didn't put points on the board and then had to fight against us ... That's going to be the difference," Kelly said. "When you finish this whole analysis, we got off to a bad start, battled our butts off, but against a good football team that's not good enough."

"I'm trying to build a program. Building programs, you want guys that compete. You want guys that love to play. You want all that competitiveness in your football team."

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### player of the game

**Andrew Luck**  
Stanford quarterback

*Luck showed why he is one of the frontrunners for the Heisman Trophy, throwing for four touchdown passes.*

### stat of the game

**1.8 yards per rush**

*The Stanford front seven dominated Notre Dame on the line of scrimmage, as the Irish averaged just 1.8 yards per carry.*

### play of the game

**Quarterback Tommy Rees' fumble in the first quarter**

*After Stanford took a 7-0 lead, the Irish were in position to tie it up when Rees fumbled, making it clear the Irish just couldn't compete.*

### quote of the game

*"We didn't come here to get second prize. We came here to get a win. Nobody in that locker room is happy with the outcome."*

**Brian Kelly**  
Irish coach



# report card

- C

quarterbacks:

It was an ugly day for the quarterbacks on the stat line, and the two interceptions really cost the Irish. However, Andrew Hendrix did show a glimpse of his potential.
- C

running backs:

Notre Dame really missed the physical presence of Jonas Gray, as Cierre Wood struggled to find space around the periphery. Theo Riddick was mediocre in spot duty.
- B

receivers:

Michael Floyd and Tyler Eifert had big days statistically, as did Riddick. Despite the receivers' big-play ability, a number of dropped passes hurt Notre Dame often.
- D

offensive line:

The Cardinal defense blitzed the Irish early and often, and Notre Dame did not respond well. When a team averages just 1.8 yards per carry and gives up five sacks, it's on the line.
- C+

defensive line:

While Louis Nix and Aaron Lynch showed flashes of brilliance, Stanford quarterback Andrew Luck rarely faced pressure, and the Cardinal ran roughshod.
- B-

linebackers:

Dan Fox played his best game of the season, but the linebackers struggled to contain Stanford's stable of tight ends, especially senior Coby Fleener.
- C-

defensive backs:

The normally-consistent Robert Blanton made a number of uncharacteristic mistakes, and while the secondary limited Luck to just 233 yards, it also gave up four touchdowns.
- C-

special teams:

David Ruffer did not have a good night, missing an early field goal that could have helped the Irish. The punt return unit is still terrible, but Ben Turk punted well.
- B-

coaching:

The move to Hendrix in the second half was clearly a good one, but it's hard to understand why the Irish didn't even come close when Stanford provided a huge opportunity.
- 2.11

overall:

Though there were bright spots here and there, the Irish struggled to even keep it close. In a game where its best was needed, Notre Dame played far from it.

# adding up the numbers

- Saturday's loss was the first for Brian Kelly in the last 15 November games in which he coached.

15
- Quarterback Andrew Hendrix recorded the first touchdown pass and first touchdown run of his career Saturday.

1
- Stanford sacked Notre Dame quarterbacks five times Saturday, resulting in a total loss of 44 yards.

5
- Six Stanford receivers caught at least two passes, compared to just three Notre Dame receivers.

6
- Saturday's loss was just Notre Dame's fourth in the last 16 games, and second in the last 10.

4
- Saturday's primetime contest marked the sixth night game for the Irish this season, a school record.

6



Senior quarterback Dayne Crist, left, and sophomore quarterback Tommy Rees converse during Notre Dame's 28-14 loss to Stanford on Saturday. Crist and Rees battled for the starting position this summer.

# I told you so: quarterbacks don't matter

STANFORD, Calif. — This column seems very familiar. In fact, above it could sit a sentence in italics: “Editor’s note: This column originally ran online at ndsmcobserver.com Monday, August 22.” That column’s title still rings true: “Kelly’s quarterback announcement doesn’t matter.”



Douglas Farmer  
Editor-in-Chief

Then, Irish fans wondered if senior Dayne Crist or sophomore Tommy Rees would lead the offense against South Florida in the season-opener. Now, Irish fans wonder if Rees or sophomore Andrew Hendrix will take the field first in the Champs Sports Bowl on Dec. 29, and, subsequently, who will have the advantage to start at quarterback next season. Then, prevailing sentiment leaned toward Crist, thanks to his physical appearance, high-profile recruitment and general skill set. Now, prevailing sentiment leans toward Hendrix, thanks to his running ability, relative success against Stanford and future possibilities. Then and now, worries about Rees stemmed from his lack of speed, arm strength and low profile. Then and now, Irish coach Brian Kelly stood by Rees thanks to his record as a starter, now at 12-3.

Then and now, whoever takes the snap from center doesn't matter. Both Rees and Hendrix are immensely talented, and each has skills the other lacks, but neither is the key to this version of the Irish, be it in the bowl game or next season. If the success of next season comes down to whom Kelly names bowl game starter, next season is already doomed. Not because neither Rees nor Hendrix is up to the task, but because so much else already would have gone wrong. Look at Bob Diaco's defense. Next year it will return seven starters, as well as current freshmen linemen Stephon Tuitt and Aaron Lynch — both of whom have excelled in extended playing time — as well as their classmate and linebacker Ishaq Williams. With this defense, Kelly's starter should not face an 80-yard field very often. Look at the offensive weapons waiting for either Rees or Hendrix. Yes, senior Michael Floyd only has one game left in a Notre Dame uniform, but do not underestimate current sophomore TJ Jones, junior Theo Riddick and junior tight end Tyler Eifert. Add in junior Cierre Wood with the backfield all to his own and another 1,000-yard season is inevitable. Who knows what current freshman receiver DaVaris Daniels and freshman running back George Atkinson will add to the recipe? With that corps, points will come if Kelly's quarterback can simply get the ball within a few feet of Eifert or to Riddick and Woods three yards past the line

of scrimmage. From a physical standpoint, Kelly's designee should not have to do much in the bowl game or next season. This year's Irish did not lose four games because of Crist or Rees. Notre Dame lost four games because of repeated defensive secondary collapses and an inexcusable influx of turnovers. This year's Irish lost four games because of unrecoverable slow starts and special team woes. This year's Irish lost four games for a multitude of reasons, but Tommy Rees was not among them. Furthermore, starting the bowl game will not give either Rees or Hendrix the added experience necessary to be a star next season. The bowl game will accomplish little for the Irish in any sense aside from possibly adding another win to the season's tally. When it comes to the gauntlet known as the 2012 schedule, however, don't look to bowl game successes or failures as precursors. Winter lifting, spring practice and summer workouts all exist for a reason. The Champs Sports Bowl exists solely to provide an enjoyable nightcap to this up-and-down season. In the end, Notre Dame fans need not worry about the quarterback, whoever it may be. Their time is better spent biting their fingernails over Manti Te'o's NFL Draft status.

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

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# Hendrix seizes rare opportunity



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

Irish sophomore quarterback Andrew Hendrix runs with the ball during Notre Dame’s 28-14 loss to Stanford on Saturday. Hendrix threw for 192 yards and accounted for two touchdowns.

By DOUGLAS FARMER  
Editor-in-Chief

STANFORD, Calif. — When Irish sophomore quarterback Tommy Rees took a hard hit on Notre Dame’s first play from scrimmage Saturday, Andrew Hendrix was standing nearby Irish coach Brian Kelly with his helmet in hand. Seconds later, Hendrix was taking a snap from senior center Mike Gol-ic, Jr.

“When Tommy goes down in the first half, I’m always ready to go in for a play or two,” Hendrix said.

Rees returned to the field on Notre Dame’s next drive, but after halftime, Kelly went with Hendrix all the way to the finish, and not because Rees was injured.

“In college football, the quarter-back is going to get hit a couple of times,” Kelly said after the 28-14 loss at Stanford. “But [Rees] was not in a situation where he could not come back in.”

Rather, Rees’ six completions on 13 attempts for 60 yards had not produced enough. Add in two turn-overs and zero points, Kelly saw cause for a change.

“We’re just trying to win games,” he said. “We’re trying to find ways to move the ball.”

Hendrix certainly did move the ball, finishing the day with 11 com-pletions for 192 yards and a touch-down, as well as 20 rushing yards on 12 carries.

“Obviously there is more of a run-pass option when I’m in there, a little more mobile,” said Hendrix,

also a sophomore. “Probably not as extensive of a knowledge of the passing game as Tommy has. You give a little, you get a little with me.”

Thanks to Hendrix’s limited snaps thus far, Stanford had limited knowledge of his repertoire, mak-ing his time in the lineup a learn-as-you-go experience for the defense.

“We felt like get-ting the ball on the perimeter with some of their load-ed-box looks might help us out,” Kelly said. “Andrew did a pretty good job in some instances ... It was his first real live situa-tion, competitive.”

Hendrix’s primary target echoed Kelly’s praise. Hendrix connected with senior receiver Michael Floyd five times for 67 yards and a touch-down.

“He played well,” Floyd said. “He stayed poised. Not having that much experience, to be able to go in there and execute on plays that coach called, he did a good job.”

Despite the change in play-call-ing and general offensive strat-egy, Floyd said the receivers do not notice when their quarterback switches.

“I know all the quarterbacks,” he said. “Whoever coach Kelly decides to put in the game, they have the ability to make plays. I see them all

the same.”

Nonetheless, with Hendrix in the game, Notre Dame relies on the package of plays he knows explic-itly.

“It’s a pretty extensive package for me,” Hendrix said as he tried to describe the motley of plays on his personal wristband. “I have a large number of plays where if I were to come into the game, I would feel comfortable with.

“Even when my number was called in the second half, it didn’t get too much out of the package. There were a couple pass plays that he asked that I was comfort-able with since I executed them in spring ball and summer practices.”

Amid the added pass plays and taking every snap, Hendrix still had time to realize he was Notre Dame’s primary quarterback in Saturday’s second half. Even the Cincinnati native was caught off guard.

“I was a little surprised,” he said. “I didn’t expect to come in and play the entire half. I thought I was going to keep switching off, but when I was called, there was no looking back.”

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# TE Eifert reaches rare milestone

By CHRIS MASOUD  
Assistant Managing Editor

STANFORD, Calif. — Junior tight end Tyler Eifert eclipsed the 1,000-yard receiving mark on a 23-yard catch in the first quar-ter, making him the fifth Irish tight end to accomplish the feat. Senior receiver Michael Floyd caught eight passes, pushing his season total to 95, a new Irish record. Former receiver Golden Tate held the previous record with 93 catches. Floyd also caught the 36th touchdown reception of his career in the third quarter, extending his Notre Dame career touchdown receptions record.

Stanford senior quarterback Andrew Luck threw four touch-downs Saturday, pushing his three-year career total to 80 and eclipsing former Cardinal quarterback John Elway’s four-year career mark of 77. Luck has thrown 35 touchdowns this sea-son.

**Halftime inspiration**

Notre Dame continued its domi-nance in the third quarter, out-scoring the Cardinal 7-0 and ex-tending its season margin in the third quarter to 84-13. The de-fense has shut out the opposing offense in the third period in each of its last five contests and 11

times over the course of the sea-son, yielding a lone touchdown to Pittsburgh on Sept. 24.

**Penalty-ridden game**

Notre Dame committed 10 pen-alties for 68 yards, including six penalties for 38 yards in the first half.

The 10 penalties marked a sea-son high, but the Irish proved to be more disciplined than the Car-dinal, who committed a total of 11 penalties for 113 yards, includ-ing seven penalties for 63 yards in the second half alone.

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# scoring summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Total
ND	0	0	7	7	14
SU	7	14	0	7	28

**First quarter**  
Stanford 7, Notre Dame 0  
Levine Toilolo 3-yd pass from Andrew Luck (Jordan Williamson kick) with 9:16 remaining  
Drive: 7 plays, 58 yards, 3:31 elapsed

**Second quarter**  
Stanford 14, Notre Dame 0  
Coby Fleener 28-yd pass from Andrew Luck (Jor-dan Williamson kick) with 4:45 remaining  
Drive: 10 plays, 80 yards, 5:14 elapsed

Stanford 21, Notre Dame 0  
Ty Montgomery 11-yd pass from Andrew Luck (Jor-dan Williamson kick) with 0:10 remaining  
Drive: 10 plays, 64 yards, 1:28 elapsed

**Third quarter**  
Stanford 21, Notre Dame 7  
Michael Floyd 6-yd pass from Andrew Hendrix (Da-vid Ruffer kick) with 6:21 remaining  
Drive: 7 plays, 77 yards, 2:53 elapsed

**Fourth quarter**  
Stanford 28, Notre Dame 7  
Coby Fleener 55-yd pass from Andrew Luck (Jor-dan Williamson kick) with 5:40 remaining  
Drive: 6 plays, 80 yards, 2:31 elapsed

Stanford 28, Notre Dame 14  
Andrew Hendrix 2-yd run (David Ruffer kick) with 0:23 remaining  
Drive: 4 plays, 87 yards, 0:39 elapsed

# statistics



passing			
Hendrix	11-24-192	Luck	20-30-233

rushing			
Wood	12-41	Taylor	20-118
Hendrix	12-20	Gaffney	6-30

receiving			
Floyd	8-92	Montgomery	6-77
Eifert	4-79	Fleener	4-97
Riddick	2-67	Hewitt	3-11
Goodman	1-6	Toilolo	2-19

tackles			
Te'o	8	Thomas	8
Blanton	6	Howell	8
Lynch	6	Lancaster	6
Gray	6	Thomas	5
Motta	6	Bernard	3
Fleming	5	Masifilo	2
Slaughter	5	Gardner	2
Nix	4	Tarpley	2
Fox	4	Gatewood	2
Smith	4	Murphy	1





THOMAS LA/The Observer



PAT COVENEY/The Observer

# Irish have no Luck

Facing their final chance to make a regular-season statement, the Irish had no answer for Stanford quarterback Andrew Luck, who bolstered his case for the Heisman Trophy with a four-touchdown performance. Needing its best performance to take down the one-loss Cardinal, Notre Dame instead turned in a gaffe-ridden effort that left the Irish with no chance of pulling off the upset. Sophomore quarterback Andrew Hendrix sparked Notre Dame in the second half, but his effort was too little, too late, as the Irish finished the regular season with a middling 8-4 record.



PAT COVENEY/The Observer



THOMAS LA/The Observer



THOMAS LA/The Observer

Clockwise from top: Irish running back Cierre Wood hurdles a Stanford defender; quarterback Tommy Rees scrambles from Cardinal defenders; receiver Michael Floyd catches a pass; tight end Tyler Eifert runs with the ball after making a catch; safety Harrison Smith breaks up a Stanford pass.