

IRISH INSIDER

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Home away from home

Four second-half rushing touchdowns, stifling defense lead Irish over Miami in Chicago

By **ALLAN JOSEPH**
Editor-in-Chief

CHICAGO — The No. 9 Irish took two minutes to find their footing in Soldier Field, but for the next 58, they ran over, around and through Miami en route to a 41-3 victory on Saturday in the fourth installment of the Shamrock Series.

“When they ran out of the tunnel, it was a pretty exciting atmosphere ... the 60-plus thousand that were here tonight made for a great atmosphere in Chicago,” Irish coach Brian Kelly said. “Our football team really fed off that energy. Again, I think it’s pretty simple ... we controlled the line of scrimmage.”

Notre Dame (5-0) started the game looking rusty from its bye week, as Hurricanes receiver Phillip Dorsett found his way behind the Irish secondary on the very first snap from scrimmage. But Dorsett dropped a picture-perfect pass from Miami quarterback Stephen Morris, setting the tone for what would be a mistake-filled performance for the Hurricanes, who committed nine penalties for 76 yards and dropped numerous passes.

“We had too many penalties, [and] too many drops. We lost our poise at times,” Miami coach Al Golden said. “We didn’t play smart enough, we didn’t play disciplined enough and we didn’t make enough plays. It’s that simple. Give Notre Dame a lot of credit.”

Irish junior quarterback Tommy Rees started the game for the Irish, as sophomore Everett Golson was suspended for the opening series after arriving late to a team meeting due to a meeting with a professor. Though the Irish were forced to punt on their first series, Miami committed a personal foul on fourth down to bring Golson onto the field. The young quarterback had his best performance of the season to date, completing 17-of-22 passes for 186 yards and adding 51 yards on the ground.

“I thought Everett grew up today,” Kelly said. “He did some really good things throwing the football for us. [He] managed some pressure situations very well. And he had his best week of practice.”

The Irish took an early 7-0 lead on a one-yard run from senior running back Theo Riddick,



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior linebacker Manti Te'o gestures to a teammate during Notre Dame's 41-3 victory over Miami on Saturday. The Notre Dame captain recorded 10 tackles as the Irish improved to 4-0 in the annual Shamrock Series.

which Miami (4-2, 3-0 ACC) answered with a field goal minutes later. Notre Dame added two more field goals in the second quarter to take a 13-3 lead into halftime.

After the break, however, the Irish offense exploded on the strength of its rushing attack, which rolled up 270 yards in the second half alone on its way to 376 rushing yards, the highest total since a 2000 victory over Boston College. Sophomore running back George Atkinson rushed for 123 yards on 10 carries, and senior running back Cierre Wood added 118 more on 18 carries. It was the first time since 2002 that two Notre Dame running backs ran for 100 yards in the same game. Senior running back Theo Riddick had 21 yards before leaving the game with a bruised elbow.

“Clearly, we felt like we found a way to run the football today,” Kelly said. “We felt like if we could keep them from getting

the big plays, and we could run the football, that was going to be our recipe for success.”

Wood got the ball rolling on Notre Dame's first drive after the half with a two-yard touchdown that followed a 37-yard run originally ruled a touchdown. Wood added another touchdown on the next drive, which preceded a 55-yard touchdown scamper from sophomore running back George Atkinson to make the score 34-3 at the end of three quarters.

“When you start to break the other team’s will, it starts to show,” senior guard Chris Watt said. “We were able to do that — that was our goal going into the second half. We knew we had established the running game. We wanted to keep up with it too.”

The Irish offense added one more touchdown, a 1-yard run from sophomore running back Cam McDaniel, in the fourth quarter to finish the scoring.

Notre Dame tallied 587 yards of total offense on the day, its highest offensive output of the season.

“It’s a good team effort out there,” Watt said. “Everyone was blocking really well today, the backs were making their cuts ... [and] we had our best group of practices as an offensive line and as a unit, so it really transferred to the field today.”

Meanwhile, the Irish defense

stifled Morris and his athletic receivers, limiting the Hurricanes to just 285 yards of total offense and no touchdowns, continuing a streak dating back to the fourth quarter of Notre Dame's Sept. 8 victory over Purdue.

“For our defense, we just focus snap after snap — one snap at a time,” senior linebacker Manti Te'o said. “We really work hard throughout the week, and our coaches do a good job instilling that mindset of trying to dominate each play.”

Notre Dame dominated the time-of-possession battle, controlling the ball for nearly two-thirds of the game, by a count of 39:08 to 20:52.

“Our game plan was situated on running the football, which equals time of possession for us,” Kelly said.

The victory made the Irish a perfect 4-for-4 in off-site home games, and Te'o said the location just two hours from campus made the energy palpable.

“It was really nice. It was a great change,” Te'o said. “Obviously we knew it was a home-field advantage for us because of the crowd.”

Notre Dame next hosts No. 18 Stanford on Saturday in a matchup made more momentous after ESPN announced its pregame show “College GameDay” would be broadcasting live from campus before the game. Despite the hype around the first 5-0 start in 10 years, Te'o said his team had to keep its mindset if it wanted to keep winning.

“We’ll sit down, we’ll watch some film and we’ll see what [the Cardinal] like to do. We’ve just got to keep it rolling,” he said. “We have to stay humble, we have to stay grounded and approach each day with a purpose.”

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PLAYER OF THE GAME

ZACK MARTIN
NOTRE DAME OFFENSIVE TACKLE

One of Notre Dame's senior captains, Martin was the standout of the offensive line's best game so far in the 2012 season. The unit dominated the line of scrimmage and opened up big holes for running backs Cierre Wood and George Atkinson. Martin deserves a lot of the credit for the season-high 376 rushing yards.

REPORT CARD

A-

QUARTERBACKS

Everett Golson had the best game of his young career, throwing for 186 yards, completing 17-of-22 passes and rushing for 51 yards. He bounced back nicely from a disciplinary issue that forced him to sit the first Irish offensive set of downs.

A

RUNNING BACKS

Cierre Wood looked like his 2011 self in a physical, 118-yard rushing performance. He was complemented by big-play back George Atkinson, whose 123 yards represented a career high.

B

RECEIVERS

Tyler Eifert continues to make every catch count. The All-American candidate recorded only two catches facing heavy coverage, but hauled in a big 23-yard reception to set up a score. The wide receivers shared the load in yet another game, with T.J. Jones' four catches being the top mark.

A

OFFENSIVE LINE

The experienced group had its best game of the 2012 campaign, opening up huge holes for Wood and Atkinson, and later Cam McDaniel. The Hurricanes failed to record a sack on Golson, and registered only one hurry.

A-

DEFENSIVE LINE

The heralded group of pass rushers failed to record a sack for the first time all season, but still had a tremendous impact on Miami quarterback Stephen Morris' comfort level in the pocket. Stephon Tuitt, Louis Nix and Kapron Lewis-Moore all had hurries on Morris.

A

LINEBACKERS

Manti Te'o continued a dream season and backed up a bye period in which he entered the Heisman Trophy discussion and was featured on the cover of "Sports Illustrated." He had 10 tackles and led a group that bottled up Miami phenom back Duke Johnson.

B

DEFENSIVE BACKS

KeiVarae Russell was a standout on the edge, showcasing his tackling ability in one-on-one situations. But the group also was lucky not to have been burned by Miami receiver Phillip Dorsett, who dropped two sure touchdowns.

B

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Kyle Brindza missed his first field goal since his first collegiate attempt against Purdue, but made two others. The Irish kick returners, punt returner and punter all had a quiet week in terms of work.

A

COACHING

Kelly deserves a ton of credit for keeping his team focused despite the high-profile setting and hyped uniforms that come with the Shamrock Series.

OVERALL GPA: 3.60

Notre Dame put forth its best performance of the 2012 season thus far under the lights in Chicago. The offensive line controlled the game, the running backs tore up an over-aggressive Miami defense and the Irish defense did not allow a touchdown for the third straight game.

PLAY OF THE GAME

ATKINSON'S 55-YARD RUN TO PUT THE GAME AWAY

In the waning seconds of a third quarter the Irish had dominated, sophomore running back George Atkinson took off through a big hole in the Miami defense and put the game away with a long run, outrunning the Miami secondary and making the score 34-3.



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Irish sophomore quarterback Everett Golson throws a pass during Notre Dame's 41-3 Shamrock Series win over Miami. Golson rebounded after sitting out the beginning of the game due to a disciplinary issue.

Two quarterbacks are better than one for Irish



Andrew Owens

Assistant Managing Editor

CHICAGO — The old adage says if you have two quarterbacks, you have none.

But, in Notre Dame's case in 2012, two quarterbacks can be managed efficiently to provide the Irish one complete quarterback.

No, this isn't Orwellian math or any kind of fuzzy math. For Notre Dame, it's the recipe for success, which looks more and more like a BCS berth with each passing week.

Not all quarterbacks are created equal. Any Irish fan can attest to that. Tommy Rees is the yin to Everett Golson's yang. Rees lacks Golson's athleticism, but Rees has more experience in high-pressure situations and, at this point, can better manage a game.

In Notre Dame's 41-3 mangle of Miami at Soldier Field on Saturday, Golson gave everyone a glimpse of the potential Irish coach Brian Kelly has alluded to when speaking about his dual-threat quarterback.

He can run. He can pass. He can dazzle.

Boy, can he dazzle.

Golson completed all six pass attempts in the first quarter and engineered a drive at the end of the first half on which he was 4-of-4 and moved the chains on each play before sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza's missed field goal attempt to end the half. In his 15-of-20 first half, Golson distributed the ball to

eight different receivers, clearly showing his patience with reads and progressions.

His breakout performance was rooted in the emergence of his running ability, a trait used sparingly during September. The wrinkle just might've caught the Hurricanes off-guard.

"We really took a hard look at where we were offensively and knew we had to open up the offense formationally, as well as the zone read game, which obviously helps us quite a bit," Kelly said.

In a game Notre Dame didn't put away until the third quarter, the most telling aspect of the sophomore's play was his ability to avoid the mistakes that led to his benching against Michigan.

When Golson struggles again — and he will — it's nice to have a 17-game starter in your back pocket.

But the junior certainly has his flaws. It's the reason Rees lost his starting job to begin with.

You won't find a bigger Tommy Rees critic than yours truly, but, in the right spots, he gives Notre Dame the best chance to win. He reached his physical peak a long time ago and his play cost Notre Dame dearly at times in 2011.

But with a defense that hasn't allowed a touchdown in a month and a potent rushing attack, the Irish don't need a Geno Smith. A Craig Krenzel will do just fine and Rees can be

exactly that.

He can manage the game and be the steady road to Golson's peaks and valleys. When the Irish find themselves in a defensive slugfest, a la Michigan two weeks ago, Rees is simply the best option.

Heading into 2012 with a brutal schedule and questions at several positions, it looked like the season would be a learning experience for the squad. Most pundits thought Notre Dame would have a couple losses before the calendar turned to October, and that scenario would've enabled Kelly to be much more patient with Golson by using a long-term approach.

But Notre Dame is 5-0. What was once considered a pipe dream is a distinct possibility: the Irish in a BCS bowl.

Each week matters. Each snap matters.

Kelly knows he can't afford to think about 2013 and 2014 when a golden opportunity exists in 2012. To his credit, he had the short-term vision from the beginning and has managed the quarterback situation beautifully — even when Golson was pulled against Purdue.

Kelly has two quarterbacks and one gargantuan opportunity. And there's nothing wrong with that.

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

Irish control clock as rushers dominate



ASHLEY DACY | The Observer

Senior running back Cierre Wood stiff-arms a Miami defender. Wood rushed for a season-high 118 yards in the Shamrock Series matchup. He also rushed for two touchdowns.

By CHRIS ALLEN
Sports Editor

CHICAGO — On most days, Irish coach Brian Kelly is not an advocate of time of possession. That was not the case after Notre Dame’s 41-3 win over Miami on Saturday. The Irish used a relentless running game and key third-down conversions to dominate the time of possession statistic, holding the ball for 39:08 of the game’s 60 minutes. After the game, Kelly acknowledged the role possessing the ball played in the one-sided Irish win.

“I am [an advocate] on these days,” Kelly said with a laugh.

The Irish ran the football early and often coming out of the locker room to start the second half, after posting a 13-3 lead in the first half. Kelly called 19 run plays out of 21 offensive plays from scrimmage in the third quarter, and the tandem of senior running back Cierre Wood and sophomore running back George Atkinson responded with three combined rushing touchdowns in the frame. Kelly said the success running the ball in the second half was fueled by the offensive line.

“We made sure that we ran the ball between [senior offensive linemen Zack Martin and Chris Watt], who are outstanding and felt like they could control the

line of scrimmage,” he said. “And we used some formations to get some good matchups. They were rotating their coverage to [senior tight end Tyler] Eifert quite a bit and again, it opened up a lot of things for us in the running game.”

After Miami redshirt senior kicker Jake Wieclaw converted a 28-yard field goal to put the score at 7-3 at the 5:32 mark in the first quarter, the Irish responded with the first of several long scoring drives they would produce throughout the game. Golson completed all four of his passes and rushed for 24 yards on a 13-play, 70-yard drive that encompassed 6:22 and ended with a 22-yard field goal by sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza. Notre Dame followed up that drive with a 14-play, 65-yard drive that also ended in a Brindza field goal. All in all, Notre Dame recorded four scoring drives consisting of more than 12 plays. Miami coach Al Golden said the disparity in time of possession took a toll on his young defense.

“It’s bad. You know, it’s not good,” Golden said. “Again, give them credit. They ran the ball effectively. They’ve got a veteran offensive line. They rotated three running backs in there and I thought they blocked well on the perimeter and as I said, we compounded by not making

any progress on offense with the football.”

The nearly two-to-one split of time of possession that resulted from the run-heavy Irish play calling kept a dangerous Miami offense off the field and contributed to its season-low three-point output on the scoreboard. Miami entered the contest having averaged 35.6 points through its first five games, but struggled to convert when it had the ball on offense.

“I just think they were executing better than we were and our defense was on the field too long. We weren’t getting first downs,” Golden said. “There was a long stretch where we were not getting first downs on offense. We were giving them the ball back. We could never get a takeaway.”

Wood, who ended the game with a season-high 188 rushing yards, said the clock-controlling performance on the ground is a sign of things to come for the Irish.

“You take it to them and smack them in the mouth enough times, they’re going to want to stop playing, and that’s what happened today,” Wood said. “It was only a matter of time. I know I can make plays, it’s just a matter of when the opportunity presents itself.”

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Atkinson has career day

By CHRIS ALLEN
Sports Editor

CHICAGO — Sophomore running back George Atkinson set a number of career highs in Notre Dame’s 41-3 victory over Miami in the Shamrock Series. Atkinson finished the contest with 123 yards on the ground on 10 carries. His average of 12.3 yards per rushing attempt is the highest for a Notre Dame running back (minimum of 10

carries) since Reggie Brooks’ 13.7 per rush in 1992 against Purdue. Atkinson’s 55-yard rushing touchdown in the waning seconds of the third quarter was his second touchdown of 50-plus yards this season.


No trail

The Irish are the only team in the Football Bowl Subdivision that has not trailed in a game. Notre Dame got on the board first with a one-yard

touchdown run by senior running back Theo Riddick in the first quarter and led throughout the contest. The 2012 incarnation of the Irish is the first Notre Dame team to accomplish this feat since the 1947 team, who never trailed en route to a national championship after accomplishing the same feat in 1946.

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SCORING SUMMARY

	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	TOTAL
	3	0	0	0	3
	7	6	21	7	41

1 NOTRE DAME 7, MIAMI 0
Theo Riddick 1-yard run (Brindza kick)
🕒 9:28 remaining
Drive: 10 plays, 88 yards, 3:54 elapsed

NOTRE DAME 7, MIAMI 3
Jake Wieclaw 28-yard field goal
🕒 5:32 remaining
Drive: 9 plays, 50 yards, 3:56 elapsed

2 NOTRE DAME 10, MIAMI 3
Kyle Brindza 22-yard field goal
🕒 14:10 remaining
Drive: 13 plays, 70 yards, 6:22 elapsed

NOTRE DAME 13, MIAMI 3
Kyle Brindza 32-yard field goal
🕒 5:07 remaining
Drive: 14 plays, 65 yards, 7:17 elapsed

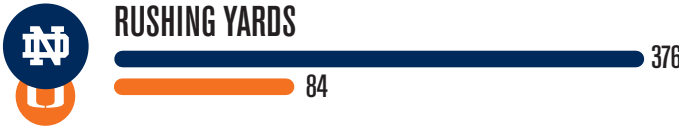
3 NOTRE DAME 20, MIAMI 3
Cierre Wood 2-yard run (Brindza kick)
🕒 11:57 remaining
Drive: 6 plays, 81 yards, 6:03 elapsed

NOTRE DAME 27, MIAMI 3
Cierre Wood 3-yard run (Brindza kick)
🕒 2:53 remaining
Drive: 12 plays, 86 yards, 6:47 elapsed

NOTRE DAME 34, MIAMI 3
George Atkinson 55-yard run (Brindza kick)
🕒 0:23 remaining
Drive: 3 plays, 66 yards, 1:34 elapsed

4 NOTRE DAME 41, MIAMI 3
Cam McDaniel 1-yard run (Brindza kick)
🕒 1:06 remaining
Drive: 13 plays, 93 yards, 8:45 elapsed

STATISTICS



PASSING			
Morris	18-35-201	Golson Rees	8-11-115 3-8-30

RUSHING			
James	26-90	Atkinson	17-52
Johnson	13-61	Wood	7-39
Clements	2-13	McDaniel	4-4

RECEIVING			
Johnson, Da.	3-40	Jones	5-32
Scott	3-33	Daniels	3-40
Johnson, D.	3-30	Riddick	2-35
James	2-11	Eifert	1-38

TACKLES			
McGee	7	Te'o	9
Paul	7	Russell	8
Perryman	6	Fox	7
Kirby	6	Calabrese	6
Rodgers II	5	Shumate	6
Johnson	5	Council	5



ASHLEY DACY | The Observer

Sophomore running back George Atkinson rushes the ball down the sideline during Notre Dame's 41-3 victory over Miami in Chicago. Atkinson finished the game with 123 yards rushing, the first 100-yard rushing performance of his career. His 55-yard rushing touchdown in the third quarter was the second 50-yard run of his season, with the first coming against Navy.

WINDY CITY BREEZE

The fourth edition of the Shamrock Series brought the Irish to Soldier Field in Chicago, and they responded with a record day on the ground in a 41-3 win over Miami. Running backs Cierre Wood and George Atkinson carried much of the load and the offensive line dominated the line of scrimmage to total 376 yards rushing. The mark is the highest in a single game for Notre Dame since 2000.



JULIE HERDER | The Observer

Sophomore quarterback Everett Golson lunges for the goal line with the ball in the first quarter.



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza lines up on a kickoff. Brindza hit two of his three field goals in the game.



ASHLEY DACY | The Observer

Sophomore running back Cam McDaniel rushes the ball. McDaniel scored a fourth-quarter rushing touchdown.



JULIE HERDER | The Observer

Senior tight end and captain Tyler Eifert goes up for a reception over a Miami defender. Eifert's 23-yard reception on the play set up a Notre Dame field goal.



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior linebacker Dan Fox and freshman cornerback KeiVarae Russell pursue a Miami ballcarrier. Russell was second on the Irish defense with six tackles in the contest.