

# IRISH INSIDER

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2012



## DOWN THE LINE

AN EXPERIENCED OFFENSIVE LINE LEADS  
THE IRISH AGAINST STANFORD

THE OBSERVER

Photo Illustration by Suzanna Pratt and Brandon Keelean



## COMMENTARY

# Saturday decides if Irish are back



**Allan Joseph**  
Editor-in-Chief

It's been the big debate all week. Four simple words.

"Is Notre Dame back?"

It'll be answered Saturday, and it's very straightforward. If the No. 7 Irish win, then they're back. If not, then, well, keep waiting.

Just six weeks ago, a quick glance at the schedule and depth chart sent Irish fans scurrying for phrases like "opportunity for growth" and "springboard season." In that view of the season, a close loss to a quality Stanford team would be an encouraging sign. The No. 17 Cardinal are consistently a strong team with standout line play and incredible discipline, and a close game would have been enough to satisfy the Irish faithful.

Now? The Irish are favored, and anything less than a victory will be a disappointment.

Think about that for a second. Stanford is a squad that rarely loses to smoke-and-mirrors opponents, Washington notwithstanding. The Cardinal meticulously prepare, play tremendously smart football and are as tough a team as any. That's the recipe that led Stanford to flat-out dominate the Irish for the last three years.

And now the Irish are expected to win. It's amazing how far things have come — since the beginning of the season, and since Brian Kelly took over. This is exactly where Kelly wants his program to be. He doesn't want people to be surprised Notre Dame is good. He doesn't want columnists musing about whether Notre Dame is back. He wants to be expected to win. He wants winning to be normal. He wants the crushing pressure of lofty expectations.

He had none of those things six weeks ago. But he has them now, and he's earned them. The real test comes next. Can the Irish fulfill their expectations? Can they win not only the games against good teams like Michigan and Michigan State, but the games against

great ones like Stanford and Oklahoma? That test starts this weekend.

Cardinal coach David Shaw has picked up where his predecessor, Jim Harbaugh, left off. For a while, Stanford's rise to the top echelon of programs looked like it would be shorter than a Palo Alto rainstorm. But Shaw has solidified the Cardinal's standing in the first tier of the Pac-12, competing with — and beating — the likes of Oregon and USC on a regular basis.

Beating decent Big Ten teams like Michigan State and Michigan should no longer be enough to appease the Irish faithful. That should be the beginning. No offense to the league I grew up watching, but it simply isn't up to par with the Pac-12 or Big 12, much less the SEC. Beating Stanford would be a much-needed sign the Irish are back on a national scale, for it would signify Notre Dame's readiness to compete with the best of the best.

It's not as if the tests stop after Stanford. BYU is pesky, and an Oct. 27 trip to Oklahoma looms. If the Irish win the next three, they'll be 8-0 and the hype machine will be out of control. But that means teams like Pitt, Boston College and Wake Forest will be looking to pull off a signature upset.

And everyone knows who's on the schedule Thanksgiving weekend.

None of that matters if Notre Dame doesn't beat Stanford. Sure, there's still a shot at a BCS bowl game and the best finish since 2005. That's great, but it's not what Kelly came to South Bend to do.

If the Irish are back, no win should be surprising. Every loss should be. Despite the way things looked just six weeks ago, a win this weekend wouldn't be a surprise. And if the Irish are 6-0 after this weekend, neither would any win after that.

Contact Allan Joseph at [ajoseph2@nd.edu](mailto:ajoseph2@nd.edu)

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

## RECRUITING

# Top defensive players on campus this weekend

By **CHRIS ALLEN**  
Sports Editor

A trio of prized 2013 recruits with scholarship offers from Notre Dame will be on campus Saturday to take in the charged atmosphere surrounding the contest between the Irish and Stanford. The Irish recruiting staff's focus will be on the defensive backfield, as two of the three recruits are projected to line up at either safety or cornerback. Irish recruiting expert Mike Frank said cornerback Chris Hawkins, safety Max Redfield and linebacker Isaac Savaiinaea are all elite prep players on the national level.

"These are the elite-of-the-elite type of players. Top-150 type players," said Frank, who runs the ESPN-affiliated Irish Sports Daily. "This is one of those funny situations where Notre Dame already has a lot of great commitments, but you'd love to add any of these three that are coming in for official visits."

Hawkins, a 5-foot-11 cornerback from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., has a verbal commitment to USC but will give Notre Dame a chance to offer its pitch this weekend. He is the No. 70-ranked player

in the country according to ESPN.

"It seems to me Hawkins is open to listening to what Notre Dame has to say," Frank said. "There's certainly an opportunity for any corner to at least come in as a freshman and play right away. Notre Dame obviously has some guys playing now who will have some experience, but even the nickel spot, the dime spot, aren't really nailed down. You'd like to have some corners playing those spots instead of safeties."

Though the Irish roster is filled with young safeties, including current starter and sophomore Matthias Farley and freshman standout Elijah Shumate, Frank said Redfield is too good a player for Notre Dame not to want. The 6-foot-2 Redfield, the No. 2 safety in the country according to ESPN, has also committed to USC.

"Notre Dame isn't in desperate need of safeties right now, but when you look at Redfield's talent, it's almost ridiculous," Frank said. "He plays like his hair's on fire. He's an extremely physical player, with incredible speed and athleticism. Comparing him to guys Notre Dame has

been recruiting at safety, and even guys on the team, I'd say he has more upside than nearly anybody."

Rounding out the weekend's top targets is a player from a familiar high school. Savaiinaea, from Honolulu, Hawaii, hails from the Punahou School — the same program that produced current Irish captain Manti Te'o and senior receiver Robby Toma. Savaiinaea committed to Stanford in March, and Frank said the same drive that pushed Manti Te'o to choose a different school than his idols may push Savaiinaea away from Notre Dame.

"Notre Dame has to at least take a look at the opportunity to sign [Savaiinaea], if he's interested," Frank said. "He might want to make his own way, and may not want to become the 'next Manti' but rather the 'first Isaac.'"

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out Mike Frank's [irishsportsdaily.com](http://irishsportsdaily.com). Email Mike at [mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net) and tell him The Observer sent you.

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# 'SONS OF ANARCHY'

By **MATTHEW DeFRANKS**  
Associate Sports Editor

Just call them the “Sons of Anarchy.”

When the offensive line enters its meeting room, they know exactly where to go. There is a seat for the president, the vice president, the secretary and the sergeant at arms — and each lineman has a spot at the table, which is modeled after the television show “Sons of Anarchy.”

“When they all come together, they all meet at a big table and you’re assigned to a seat by who you are in the group,” graduate student center Braxton Cave said. “We kind of have it set up in the same manner.”

Senior left tackle Zack Martin is the president, Cave is the vice president, senior left guard Chris Watt is the secretary and graduate student right guard Mike Golic Jr. is the sergeant at arms. Junior right tackle Christian Lombard is the final starter on the offensive line.

The setup has facilitated Notre Dame’s nearly five-yards-per-carry average and allowed No. 7 Irish jump out to their best start in a decade. While offensive line play has keyed Notre Dame’s hot start, the big guys up front have not been given much of the credit.

Martin said the line has become accustomed to not receiving their fair due.

“If we hear our name, it’s probably not a good thing,” he said. “The more we can stay out of the press, the better.”

The unit — which weighs a combined 1,527 pounds — entered the season a strength of an Irish squad and brought 127 total games of experience with them. The youngest member on the offensive line is Lombard, a junior.

“It’s one of those things where usually every year there is a new group and we were fortunate to bring all five guys back,” Golic said. “You can really learn where your help is coming from different guys on the field and where you can afford to help another guy out. That chemistry is huge for offensive line play.”

The chemistry of an offensive line is key to any team’s success but especially for the Irish — who have a first-time starter at quarterback in sophomore Everett Golson.

“Everyone knows offense starts up front,” Martin said. “If we can’t block and run the football, if we can’t protect the quarterback, it doesn’t matter who we have on the outside. We could have an entire team of [senior tight end] Tyler Eifert’s, it doesn’t

matter. We have to do our job.”

ESPN analyst Kirk Herbstreit said the Irish could potentially ride their strong offensive line to the BCS National Championship Game in January.

“The development of that offensive line, with the skill that they have on the offensive side of the ball, how far they come up front will dictate whether or not they can truly become a threat to try to push to get into the top two at the end of the year,” Herbstreit said.

## Sticking together

Martin, one of four Irish captains, has taken on more of a leadership role this year, Irish coach Brian Kelly said.

“He’s a leader,” Kelly said. “He was a good player for us last year, too, and he’s a good player for us this year. He’s taken his leadership to a new level. He’s communicating, taking responsibility for all the players on the offensive line. I think he’s evolved more as a leader for us more than anything else.”

Watt echoed Kelly’s sentiment. “Zack is the leader, being a captain and all he’s definitely our vocal leader,” Watt said. “He also does a great job of getting us riled up before practice, and communicating with the whole group. We all try to pick it up, but he’s there to get us going if we’re

***“It’s one of those things where usually every year there is a new group and we were fortunate to bring all five guys back.”***

Mike Golic, Jr.  
offensive lineman

having a bad day.”

Off the field, Martin and Watt are housemates and were roommates each summer.

“They’re inseparable off the field,” Kelly said. “They hang out together. If you go up to team meal they will be eating together, so they’re close and what that brings is a lot of collateral communication about their position and how they can help each other.”

While the grind of a long season may wear on some teammates, Martin said he does not get tired of seeing Watt.

“He’s one of my best buddies

and I don’t know what I’d do without him,” Martin said. “We get along, we’re pretty compatible I would say. We like to do the same things so we get along pretty well.”

The rest of the offensive line, however, is not left out.

“For the most part we get along

really well and it’s a fun group of guys,” Golic said. “It’s a group of guys I am fortunate enough to spend my last year here with. We have a mix of young guys, old guys and it’s really exciting to be around.”

Cave — who described Watt as the best dancer of the bunch and Golic as the best singer of the group — said while it’s mostly fun and games, he said the line does not always get along.

“We’re always together,” Cave said. “They’d probably say I’m the more serious guy out of the group probably because I get mad the easiest when someone

messes with me. Everyone’s a bunch of jokesters.

“This is definitely the closest line that I’ve been associated with since I’ve been here. This group just seemed to gel very well.”

## Growing into their role

The teamwork on the field got off to a slow start this season after the Irish gave up five sacks, eight tackles for loss and rushed for just 52 yards in a 20-17 win over Purdue.

“We needed to step up our game and take it to the next level and we’ve done a good job of that,” Cave said.

The next week, however, against then-No. 10 Michigan State, Notre Dame rebounded to run for 122 yards while Golson was sacked just once. The Irish have not allowed a sack since the 20-3 win over the Spartans, a span of 85 pass attempts.

“If we make a mistake, we see it and we learn from it and that’s what we’ve been doing the past few weeks, learning from our mistakes,” Martin said.

In a 41-3 win over Miami, the offensive line consistently opened up holes as the Irish rushed for 376 yards, the program’s most

since 2000.

“That game was so much fun knowing that every snap we’re just going to run the ball and gash their defensive linemen and as an offensive line, that’s what you want to do,” Martin said.

In the second half, the Irish engineered two touchdown drives that consisted of just running plays. Lombard said the repeated runs were great for the offensive line.

“It’s what you look forward to as an offensive lineman,” Lombard said. “Moving a guy against his will is what football is all about. That was a signature win for us right there.”

Kelly awarded the game ball to the offensive line.

After this season, Cave and Golic will have exhausted their collegiate eligibility, but Martin and Watt are both eligible for fifth years. Lombard, meanwhile, is the only lineman assured of a roster spot next year.

The “Sons of Anarchy” ride motorcycles on television but, for Notre Dame, they may just determine its fate.

Contact Matthew DeFranks at [mdefrank@nd.edu](mailto:mdefrank@nd.edu)



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer



# Irish defense continues impressive streaks

By **ANDREW OWENS**  
Assistant Managing Editor

When Notre Dame hired Brian Kelly following the 2009 season, it was due in large part to the coach's offensive pedigree at his previous head coaching stops. However, at his introductory press conference, Kelly emphasized the need for a staunch defense over a prolific passing attack.

The defense Kelly inherited ranked 88th in total yards allowed per game. In 2012 — Kelly's third season — a defensive uprising has fueled Notre Dame's 5-0 start and has prognosticators from coast to coast wondering what heights the team can reach.

"I think you have to make sure that it's valued within your program, and when I say 'valued,' [it's] through your recruiting efforts, an emphasis on taking players that can impact your defense and in particular against the rush," Kelly said this week. "So if the blueprint was public, it would talk about right out of the gates finding those guys that can physically control the line of scrimmage."

And that's exactly what Notre Dame has done. The Irish have held three consecutive opponents without a touchdown, a streak that has lasted more than 182 minutes of action, dating back to Purdue's game-tying touchdown pass late in Notre Dame's 20-17 victory over the Boilermakers on Sept. 8.

"It's exciting, but I don't think the guys keep track of statistics like that," sophomore safety Matthias Farley said.

Irish senior linebacker Manti Te'o credits defensive coordinator Bob Diaco with leading the charge in a defensive revival.

"The greatest change is our coach, Coach Diaco," Te'o said. "He's our mentor, he's our second dad."

"When you have that connection with a coach, you'll do whatever for him and do anything for him. I think our defense has really paid tribute to him and the sacrifices that he and our other coaches on the defensive side have made to make us the successful defense that we are thus far."

Behind Diaco's tutelage, the Irish have allowed 39 points in five games, which ranks second nationally. Notre Dame is the only team that has not allowed a rushing touchdown this season and has yet to trail in 2012.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of Notre Dame's defensive surge is the play of the inexperienced secondary. Following graduate student Jamoris Slaughter's season-ending injury three weeks into the season, the Irish secondary was left with three new starters and senior safety Zeke Motta. What was expected to be a detriment has been a plus during the undefeated start.

"It was going to be a rebuilding year for us in the secondary anyway, and then a few other

**"We've continued to maintain the same core beliefs and the same defensive ideologies that we've had since we've gotten here."**

Bob Diaco  
defensive coordinator

poorly timed events that created an even more inexperienced secondary," Diaco said. "A lot of the thought process goes into making sure those guys aren't overly exposed so for 2012, that's a big part of our thought

process. Allowing them to develop and not overexposing them."

Diaco said the resurgence is a result of three years' worth of teaching by the coaching staff, and the willingness of the players to buy in to the philosophy.

"We've continued to maintain the same core beliefs and the same defensive ideologies that we've had since we've gotten here," Diaco said. "Over time, the consistency, the maturity of the players, the expectation is that they continue to improve the things we were working on. They're improving at it. It's just sheer physics as the players become bigger, faster, stronger ... The sheer physics of a pretty stout front creates some obstructions."

Contact Andrew Owens at  
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ASHLEY DACY | The Observer

The Irish defense, pictured during its 41-3 win over Miami on Saturday, has not allowed a touchdown in three games.

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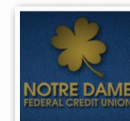
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# Stanford turns to Nunes, Taylor to replace Luck



SARAH O'CONNOR | The Observer

Stanford running back Stepfan Taylor, left, tries to evade Irish linebacker Manti Te'o during the Cardinal's 37-14 win in 2010.

By **ANDREW GASTELUM**  
Associate Sports Editor

How do you replace 10,387 total yards of offense, 82 passing touchdowns and a two-time

Heisman runner-up whose last name emanates exactly what you hope a quarterback has on his side?

The Cardinal's answer is replacement by committee,

and an experienced one at that as senior playmakers lead each major offensive category on a team relying heavily on fundamentals.

"Over the past three years we obviously went up against one of the best quarterbacks to ever come out of college football," senior linebacker Manti Te'o said. "It was a pleasure to play against him and be on the same field as him because he brought a different dynamic to the game. But with Stanford, I love playing against this type of team ... It's back-to-basics football."

In his second year at the helm since taking over for current San Francisco 49ers coach Jim Harbaugh, Stanford coach David Shaw finds his team without its do-it-all leader in No. 1 pick Andrew Luck. Nonetheless, Irish coach Brian Kelly said the Cardinal remain

dangerous with a glut of options on the offensive side of the ball.

"Stanford is unique itself," Kelly said. "Not only do they run the ball out of multiple formations and jumbo packages, they create great one-on-one matchups, so you would think you play a lot of zone you have to drop extra players down to defend the run which gives them a one-on-one matchup. So [it's] another unique challenge for us."

The Cardinal offense finds its legs in senior running back Stepfan Taylor, who led Stanford's 21-14 upset win over No. 2 USC on Sept. 15 with 213 total yards and two touchdowns. The last time Notre Dame saw Taylor, the captain rushed for 118 yards on 20 carries in a 28-14 Stanford win Nov. 26, 2011 in Luck's last home game.

"We're going to play a lot of great backs, and I don't want to throw superlatives out about everybody, but Taylor is an outstanding back," Kelly said. "He's proven himself. He's a physical player. He can get banged up, come back and continue to compete. You can see he's the heart of their football team and one of their captains."

Even though Notre Dame shut down Heisman candidates in Michigan State junior running back Le'Veon Bell (77 yards) and Michigan senior quarterback Denard Robinson (90 yards), Te'o — who has yet to defeat Stanford — said the Irish defense has a tough task in limiting the double-threat ability of Taylor, who leads the team in rushing and is third in receptions.

"He's fast, he's strong, he's a powerful runner, and he keeps his legs moving, which makes it hard for opponents to bring him down," Te'o said. "I played against him my sophomore year, and the strides he's made to improve his game have really shown."

Meanwhile, senior quarterback Josh Nunes has the arduous task of replacing a legend at the quarterback position. Following then-No. 8 Stanford's 17-13 loss at Washington on Sept. 27, critics and fans alike called for Shaw to bench the first-time starter. But Nunes responded the following week with a five-touchdown performance (two passing, three rushing) and 360 passing yards in a thrilling 54-48 overtime win over Arizona on Saturday.

"Any quarterback who plays under a guy like Luck is going to know a lot and learn a lot because you were able to watch one of the best players in recent years in college football go about his business and emulate whatever he is doing," sophomore safety Matthias Farley said. "You have to be keyed in on fact that he has a strong arm and can extend the play if he needs to. He's a very, very talented quarterback and you have to go into the game knowing that he can make plays."

So far this season, Nunes' main targets have been a pair of towering senior tight ends: 6-foot-8, 265-pound Levine Toilolo and 6-foot-6, 252-pound Zach Ertz. Toilolo and Ertz have combined for eight touchdowns and 594 receiving yards, more than half of Nunes' 1,151 passing yards this season.

"They have dual-threat tight ends and they're big," Te'o said. "It's basically a skinnier lineman running out there that can catch and has some speed. Whenever you have that threat, it's similar to a dual-threat quarterback. You have to understand what you're going up against and their tendencies and their strengths."

Contact Andrew Gastelum at [agastell@nd.edu](mailto:agastell@nd.edu)

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### CARDINAL PASSING

The Andrew Luck era has ended but that doesn't mean the Cardinal's fortune in the passing game has. Senior Josh Nunes has the tough task of trying to replace Luck, but that has not stopped the Cardinal from becoming a top-25 team, including a No. 8 ranking after a 21-14 win over then-No. 2 USC on Sept. 15. Nunes has thrown for 1,145 yards and eight touchdowns in five games this year. In the Cardinal's 54-48 overtime win over Arizona on Saturday, Nunes threw for a career-high 360 yards and two touchdowns. But the biggest stat for Nunes against the Wildcats was the zero in the interception column, as his four interceptions and early inconsistency fueled calls for his benching.

In Stanford's tight-end-heavy offense, it should come as no surprise that the Cardinal's top two receivers are tight ends. Senior tight end Zach Ertz leads the team with 21 receptions, 316 receiving yards and two touchdowns. Following Ertz is fellow senior tight end Levine Toilolo, who has recorded 278 yards and two touchdowns while averaging 21.4 yards per catch. Toilolo recorded a career-high 141 receiving yards against Arizona, including two catches of 40-plus yards. This season, Stanford receivers are averaging more than a first down for each reception with 13.1 yards per catch.

Despite the loss of two linemen to the first round of the NFL Draft, the veteran offensive line has allowed Nunes to ease into the starting quarterback role. The offensive front has only given up five sacks on the year, the lowest in the Pac-12.

The Irish secondary looked impressive — minus the first few near-touchdowns — in Notre Dame's 41-3 win over Miami on Saturday. The young secondary held Miami junior quarterback Stephen Morris to 201 yards and no touchdowns after he threw for over 500 yards and five touchdowns the week before. The Irish rank 10th in the country in pass efficiency and only give up 16 first downs per game. The defense can also thank Michigan senior quarterback Denard Robinson for half of its eight

interceptions, a mark good enough for 16th in the nation.

### EDGE: EVEN

### CARDINAL RUSHING

The Cardinal rushing attack ran for a season-high 257 yards against Arizona last week, led by senior running back Stepfan Taylor's 142-yard performance. Taylor averages 111 yards per game and has totaled 555 yards and five touchdowns this season. Nunes led a 14-point comeback in the fourth quarter with two of his three rushing touchdowns against Arizona.

The Irish defense only gives up 7.8 points per game and has not allowed a touchdown in the last three games. In fact, Notre Dame has yet to give up a rushing touchdown all year and, going back to 2011, hasn't given up a rushing touchdown in the last 30 quarters.

### EDGE: NOTRE DAME

### CARDINAL OFFENSIVE COACHING

Defensive coordinator Bob Diaco will have yet another intricate offense to deal with this week, as Stanford head coach David Shaw was Jim Harbaugh's offensive coordinator before taking over as head coach two years ago.

### EDGE: EVEN

### CARDINAL SPECIAL TEAMS

Cardinal senior punter Daniel Zychlinski averages 54.2 yards per punt and each of his four punts against Arizona was over 50 yards. Senior receiver Drew Terrell ranks fifth in the country with 20 yards per punt return.

### EDGE: STANFORD

### CARDINAL SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	San Jose State	W 20-17
Sept. 8	Duke	W 52-13
Sept. 15	USC	W 21-14
Sept. 27	@ Washington	L 17-13
Oct. 6	Arizona	W 54-48 (OT)
Oct. 13	@ Notre Dame	
Oct. 20	@ Cal	
Oct. 27	Washington State	
Nov. 3	@ Colorado	
Nov. 10	Oregon State	
Nov. 17	@ Oregon	
Nov. 24	@ UCLA	

# HEAD T

## NO. 17 STANFORD



S

(Sr.) Drew Terrell **4** WR  
(So.) Kelsey Young 39

(Jr.) David Yankey **54** LT  
(Fr.) Andrus Peat 70

(Sr.) Stepfan Taylor **33** RB  
(Jr.) Ricky Seale 30

(Sr.) Khalil Wilkes **65** LG  
(Jr.) David Yankey 54

(Sr.) Josh Nunes **6** QB (R-Sr.) Sam Schwartzstein **64** C  
(Jr.) Brett Nottingham 7 (Jr.) Connor McFadden 63

(Sr.) Ryan Hewitt **85** FB (Sr.) Kevin Danser **76** RG  
(Jr.) Lee Ward 46 (Fr.) Joshua Garnett 51

(Jr.) Cameron Fleming **73** RT  
(Fr.) Kyle Murphy 78

(Sr.) Levine Toilolo **11** TE  
(So.) Zach Ertz 86

(Sr.) Jamal-Rashad Patterson **21** WR  
(So.) Jordan Pratt 87

S

(Sr.) Terrence Brown **6** CB  
(Fr.) Alex Carter 25

(Sr.) Trent Murphy **93** OLB  
(So.) Kevin Anderson 48

(Jr.) Ed Reynolds **29** FS  
(Jr.) Devon Carrington 25

(Jr.) Henry Anderson **91** DE  
(Sr.) Josh Mauro 90

(Jr.) A.J. Tarpley **17** ILB (Sr.) Terrence Stephens **99** NG  
(So.) James Valighters 9 (Jr.) David Parry 58

(Sr.) Shane Skov **11** ILB (Sr.) Ben Gardner **49** DE  
(Sr.) Jarek Lancaster 35 (Fr.) Aziz Shittu 7

(So.) Jordan Richards **8** SS (R-Sr.) Chase Thomas **44** OLB  
(R-Sr.) Harold Bernard 28 (R-Sr.) Alex Debiak 42

(Jr.) Barry Browning **31** CB  
(So.) Wayne Lyons 2

S

(Jr.) Jordan Williamson **19** PK  
(Jr.) Ben Rhyne 14

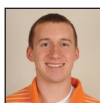
(Jr.) Jordan Williamson **19** KO

(R-Sr.) Daniel Zychlinski **36** P (Fr.) Alex Carter **25** KR  
(Jr.) Ben Rhyne 14 (So.) Kelsey Young 39

(Sr.) Drew Terrell **4** PR (Fr.) Reid Miller **67** LS  
(Sr.) Jacob Gowan 56



**Allan Joseph**  
Editor-in-Chief



**Andrew Owens**  
Assistant Managing Editor



**Chris Allen**  
Sports Editor

And you thought the hype around the Michigan game was big. A top-10 ranking. Heisman chatter. Sports Illustrated. And now, "College GameDay." What does all of that translate into from a football perspective? Nothing but noise.

I could talk about Everett Golson and Josh Nunes or the Notre Dame linebackers and the Stanford tight ends. But really, this game will be won by whichever team can tune out the noise — and the Cardinal have been nothing if not steady under the cool leadership of David Shaw.

Yet this Irish squad takes its cue from its emotional leader, Manti Te'o — and you can't find a more focused player in the country. It'll come down to the fourth quarter. But this Notre Dame squad has proved one thing: It's time for me to stop doubting.

For weeks, I've been told I'm a hater. How could I possibly pick Notre Dame to go 7-5 or 8-4? How could I possibly expect Notre Dame to lose at then-No. 10 Michigan State, or predict Purdue and Miami to keep it close against the Irish?

While recent history has hardly been on Notre Dame's side, the 2012 Irish seem to have amnesia.

If Notre Dame survives Saturday's test against a physical Stanford squad, it will put them in prime position to secure a BCS berth, barring a big upset.

Stanford's offense has struggled against every team not coached by Rich Rodriguez on its schedule, so why expect the Irish defense to slow down now?

The touchdown streak will end at 12 quarters for Notre Dame, but it won't stop them from rolling to a 6-0 start.

Yes, a competition between Notre Dame and Stanford is a marquee matchup — and it's not the Quiz Bowl or the debate teams. These two academic stalwarts have honed a very unique product on the football field. As one might expect, the two teams are very similar.

Notre Dame gets the edge in this one due to the athleticism of the front seven on defense. You can bet Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco is keying in on Stanford running back Stepfan Taylor, who has a long history of rushing well against Notre Dame. Luckily — no pun intended — he doesn't have to worry about All-Everything quarterback Andrew Luck beating him if he stacks the box. Josh Nunes is still adjusting to the starting role, and the Irish defense will continue its dominance.

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 20, Stanford 17

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 31, Stanford 13

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 23, Stanford 13



# NO. 7 HEAD



## NO. 7 NOTRE DAME



JULIE HERDER | The Observer



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

**CB 6 KeiVarae Russell** (Fr.)  
43 Josh Atkinson (So.)

**OLB 13 Danny Spond** (Jr.)  
30 Ben Council (So.)

**DE 89 Kapron Lewis-Moore** (Gr.)  
91 Sheldon Day (Fr.)

**NG 9 Louis Nix** (Jr.)  
96 Kona Schwenke (Jr.)

**DE 7 Stephon Tuitt** (So.)  
69 Tony Springmann (So.)

**OLB 55 Prince Shembo** (Jr.)  
11 Ishaq Williams (So.)

**CB 2 Bennett Jackson** (Jr.)  
21 Jalen Brown (So.)



**WR 7 T.J. Jones** (Jr.)  
10 DaVaris Daniels (So.)

**WR 9 Robby Toma** (Sr.)  
19 Davonte Neal (Fr.)

**RT 74 Christian Lombard** (Jr.)  
64 Tate Nichols (Jr.)

**RG 57 Mike Golic Jr.** (Gr.)  
72 Nick Martin (So.)

**C 52 Braxton Cave** (Gr.)  
57 Mike Golic Jr. (Gr.)

**LG 66 Chris Watt** (Sr.)  
65 Conor Hanratty (So.)

**LT 70 Zack Martin** (Sr.)  
78 Ronnie Stanley (Fr.)

**TE 80 Tyler Eifert** (Sr.)  
18 Beh Koyack (So.)

**WR 81 John Goodman** (Gr.)  
87 Daniel Smith (Jr.)



**KO 27 Kyle Brindza** (So.)  
40 Nick Tausch (Sr.)

**KR 4 George Atkinson** (So.)  
6 Theo Riddick (Sr.)

**LS 60 Jordan Cowart** (Sr.)  
61 Scott Daly (Fr.)

**PK 27 Kyle Brindza** (So.)  
40 Nick Tausch (Sr.)

**P 35 Ben Turk** (Sr.)  
27 Kyle Brindza (So.)

**PR 19 Davonte Neal** (Fr.)  
81 John Goodman (Gr.)



### IRISH PASSING

Sophomore quarterback Everett Golson looked composed in Notre Dame's 41-3 win over Miami on Saturday. Despite sitting out the first series after arriving late to a team meeting, Golson infused energy into the Irish offense with 187 passing yards and his mobility. The sophomore ran the ball effectively on designed run plays while avoiding pressure from the Miami defensive line by moving outside of the pocket and keeping his eyes downfield. Golson only threw five incompletions in the entire game and didn't turn the ball over once.

Sophomore receiver DaVaris Daniels leads the Irish in receiving with 207 yards while sophomore running back Theo Riddick leads the Irish in receptions with 12. But senior tight end and captain Tyler Eifert has only three catches in his last three games, while he recorded four receptions in each of the first two games. The Irish only have three passing touchdowns this year, which is as many interceptions as Golson has thrown. Junior quarterback Tommy Rees remains a viable and proven backup should Golson run into trouble.

Meanwhile, the Cardinal defense comes in as the 113th best passing defense in the nation, giving up over 300 yards per game. That bodes well for an inconsistent Irish passing attack, especially if the veteran offensive line can do what it did against Miami. Junior safety Ed Reynolds leads the Cardinal with three interceptions.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### IRISH RUSHING

Against Miami, four Irish running backs scored touchdowns for the first time since 1996. Notre Dame rushed for a staggering 376 yards on Saturday and has won its last 10 games when recording at least 200 rushing yards. Sophomore running back George Atkinson led the way against Miami with 123 yards and a touchdown on 10 carries while senior running back Cierre Wood rushed for 118 yards and two touchdowns. Golson even rushed for 51 yards on six carries to

keep the defense off balance. The rushing attack was mostly responsible for Notre Dame's 34 first downs and over 39 minutes of possession. The Irish also averaged an impressive 7.4 yards per carry.

But Stanford comes into Notre Dame Stadium with the sixth-best rushing defense in the nation. The Cardinal only gives up 77.2 yards per game and ranks fourth in the country with 8.6 tackles for a loss per game. Senior defensive end and Lombardi Award candidate Ben Gardner has six tackles for a loss this season. Senior linebacker Shayne Skov recorded a season-high nine tackles against Arizona on Saturday and is part of a formidable Cardinal linebacking corps.

**EDGE: EVEN**

### IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

Stanford's passing defense has been pretty shaky this season and Irish coach Brian Kelly showed against Miami that he is not afraid to throw the ball against an ineffective secondary.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

The only action senior Irish punter Ben Turk saw against Miami was on a roughing-the-kicker penalty that prolonged Notre Dame's opening drive. Sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza made two of his three field goal attempts, both coming in the first half to help build a 10-point lead. The Irish still have not seen a spark in their return game from either freshman receiver Davonte Neal or Atkinson.

**EDGE: EVEN**

### IRISH SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Navy	W 50-10
Sept. 8	Purdue	W 20-17
Sept. 15	@ Michigan State	W 20-3
Sept. 22	Michigan	W 13-6
Oct. 6	vs. Miami	W 41-3
Oct. 13	Stanford	
Oct. 20	BYU	
Oct. 27	@ Oklahoma	
Nov. 3	Pittsburgh	
Nov. 10	@ Boston College	
Nov. 17	Wake Forest	
Nov. 24	@ USC	



**Andrew Gastelum**  
Associate Sports Editor



**Matthew DeFranks**  
Associate Sports Editor

With each new week, the Irish have handled every doubt thrown their way. Now they will have to deal with the sixth-best rushing defense in the country. Do the Irish run right at the Cardinal front seven or do they rely on the usually inconsistent aerial attack?

This is a matchup between two similar defenses, although the Irish secondary has not struggled as much as that of the Cardinal. But then again, the Irish secondary hasn't seen Matt Barkley yet either.

This should be a defensive battle the whole way through, and it could get ugly. Whichever defense has the better day will go home with the victory. The distractions off the field won't matter to either team and Lee Corso's pick won't determine the outcome either.

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 14, Stanford 11

If you don't like all the attention Notre Dame gets, you should stay away from campus this weekend. Between "Mike and Mike" on Friday morning, "College Gameday" on Saturday morning and "Onward Notre Dame" on NBC on Saturday afternoon, the buzz around campus is enough to whip a studious student body into a frenzy.

Homefield advantage may help the Irish but it will not decide the game. The still stout Irish defense hasn't given up a touchdown since the Purdue game and a hot-and-cold Stanford offense should have trouble with the Notre Dame front.

On offense, Everett Golson has his confidence back and should continue to run the dangerous zone-read.

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 20, Stanford 6

17/17      7/7  
**Stanford vs. Notre Dame**  
(4-1)      (5-0)

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# Schools achieve top-20 rankings



Observer File Photo

*Notre Dame and Stanford, pictured here during the Cardinal's 28-14 win in 2011, are similar schools and compete for the same recruits.*

By **ANDREW OWENS**  
Assistant Managing Editor

Sophomore quarterback Everett Golson was benched for part of the first series against Miami last weekend after not communicating he would be late to a team meeting because he was with a professor.

Such is the life of a student-athlete at institutions blending superb academics and elite athletics like Notre Dame and Stanford.

Although Saturday's gridiron matchup is the 27th between the academics peers, it also marks a first in the series — and in college football history. Notre Dame is ranked seventh in the AP Poll and 17th in the 2012 U.S. News and World Report university rankings, while Stanford is 17th and sixth, respectively. It's the first-ever matchup between schools in the top-20 of both rankings.

Irish coach Brian Kelly is emphatic that it is possible to blend top-notch academics and football at major universities.

"It doesn't get enough attention," Kelly said. "You have two outstanding academic institutions that are ranked so high in terms of graduation rates ... I know that's one of the reasons why I came to Notre Dame. I wanted to make sure that everybody knew that you could do it in the classroom and you can certainly do it on the football field."

Notre Dame ranks first nationally with its 99 percent graduation rate of all athletes, while Stanford is seventh at 94 percent.

"I think it makes for a great showcase," John Heisler, senior associate athletic director, said. "Where you have your share of naysayers who don't think that

it's possible to combine great academics and athletics, I think you're talking about two institutions that would disagree with that and think you can do it.

"As Brian Kelly said in his press conference today, that's part of the reason why he's here, because he absolutely thinks that you can do that, that you can have the highest graduation rates or very high graduation rates and be a BCS team on a regular basis, and that's what we're trying to do and that's what Stanford's trying to do."

Sophomore safety Matthias Farley said the academic achievements of the schools provide an interesting storyline in the annual matchup.

"Notre Dame's a great school and Stanford's a great school, so it's a huge testament to both programs in accomplishing good things on and off the field. The fact that we're both playing, you know there are going to be a lot of smart guys on our team and a lot of smart guys on their team. It's a good matchup."

Because Notre Dame and Stanford recruit from a similar pool of athletes, it's Kelly's task to prove to recruits that the University is ultimately different from its West Coast counterpart, despite the similarities.

"We think we have many, many distinctions that are unique to Notre Dame," Kelly said. "We make sure that recruits that are looking at Stanford and looking at Notre Dame understand what we believe to be those distinctions. We clearly see them, and we make sure the recruits understand that there are some clear distinctions between Notre Dame and Stanford."

Contact Andrew Owens at [aowens2@nd.edu](mailto:aowens2@nd.edu)

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WAKING THE ECHOES | MATT LOVECCHIO

# LoVecchio remembers first start, transfer



Observer File Photo

Former Irish quarterback Matt LoVecchio carries the ball during Notre Dame's 20-14 win over Stanford in 2000.

By **MATTHEW DeFRANKS**  
Associate Sports Editor

*Editor's note: This is the seventh of a new Observer feature. The "Waking the Echoes" series intends to inform fans about some former players and will feature weekly stories profiling them and their lives since Notre Dame.*

Notre Dame fans did not know it, but they were witnessing the future of college football.

On Oct. 7, 2000 against Stanford, former Irish quarterback Matt LoVecchio, then a freshman signal caller, made his first career collegiate start. On the first drive of the game, Notre Dame scored a touchdown using an array of four- and five-receiver shotgun sets, zone-read option plays and designed quarterback draws.

Sound familiar? That's right, Notre Dame ran the spread offense long before Brian Kelly brought his attack to South Bend.

"It's crazy to look back and watch what we were able to do as an offense at the time and how that spread offense really evolved to what it is now. It's pretty neat," LoVecchio said in a phone interview with The Observer.

The opening drive — rumored to have been called by then-receivers coach Urban Meyer — helped LoVecchio settle in and lead the Irish to a 20-14 victory over the Cardinal.

"It was a great way to start the game and build your confidence level for myself personally for the rest of the team knowing that we have the ability to go in there and run a lot of different sets and the ability to check into different plays, run the ball and throw the ball effectively," LoVecchio said. "That really set the tone for how we were able to play the rest of the game."

While Meyer was one of the first people to greet him on the sideline after the drive, LoVecchio said the current Ohio State head coach did not solely call the drive.

"The whole offensive staff

was involved," LoVecchio said. "I don't know who exactly was calling the offense but I think coach Meyer's input was definitely there as well."

Despite the strong opening drive, LoVecchio finished the game 10-for-18 for 100 yards although he did toss two touchdown passes. He also rushed for 36 yards on 13 carries in his debut.

"There's so much going on around you and you need to make sure you have the right personnel grouping, make sure you're getting the play with enough time to get up to the line of scrimmage," LoVecchio said. "You need to make sure, you're in the right play you're supposed to be. I just remember being really focused and taking it one series at a time. That's the way I approached the entire season."

LoVecchio earned the start after starting quarterback Arnaz Battle suffered an injury and backup Gary Godsey struggled against Michigan State. LoVecchio entered the

27-21 loss to the Spartans in the second half and completed one pass for 43 yards.

Former Irish coach Bob Davie told LoVecchio he would be starting against Stanford early the next week.

"At the time, I never really had expectations playing my first year," LoVecchio said. "I just wanted to go into school and get acclimated to the college environment and just kind of settle in and learn the offense and mature physically. Just the reality of the situation and how things unfolded, I became more prepared."

After leading the Irish to a win over Stanford, the Franklin Lakes, N.J., native earned the next seven starts in the season, leading Notre Dame to a BCS berth. He was 7-1 as a starter in 2000.

"[The Stanford game] was step one but you're only as good as your last play, in this case, your last game," LoVecchio said. "It's not to say that I deserved it for the entire season because it was too early at the time. Based on the performance of that game, I think I was worthy of starting the next game."

With LoVecchio at the helm, the Irish reeled off seven consecutive wins, climbing from No. 25 in the rankings all the way to No. 10 before losing by 32 points to Oregon State in the Fiesta Bowl.

"Guys started having more confidence in myself and our ability to go out there and execute. As the wins keep coming, you start to build confidence. Winning is contagious," LoVecchio said. "That part of the year everybody contributed and I think we had great team camaraderie and all the wins came as a team."

LoVecchio finished 2000 with

980 passing yards, 11 touchdowns and just one interception while also gaining 300 yards on the ground.

Despite winning his first seven starts the previous year and being named an early Heisman hopeful by Sports Illustrated, LoVecchio did not enter the 2001 season as Notre Dame's clear-cut No. 1 quarterback. He would have to battle Carlyle Holiday and Jared Clark for the starting job.

LoVecchio started the season opener at Nebraska and a road tilt at Michigan State before he was lifted in favor of Holiday before the third game. Notre Dame lost its first three games and was off to the first 0-3 start in program history.

Despite the diminished playing time, LoVecchio — who eventually transferred to Indiana — said that was not the beginning of the end of his time at Notre Dame.

"Not at all," he said. "We started out the year losing to Nebraska on the road, lost to Michigan State and then they made the decision to change gears on offense as a result of not moving the ball downfield and putting up points. Carlyle got an opportunity. It was not the end of my time at Notre Dame as a result of that."

In the final eight games of the season, LoVecchio attempted a total of 11 passes as the Irish sputtered to a 5-6 season that would be Davie's last. LoVecchio transferred after the season.

He said there was not a specific reason for his transfer and added that he does not regret leaving Notre Dame.

"I don't. I'm grateful for the opportunity that Notre Dame gave me," LoVecchio said. "I met a bunch of great people as teammates, coaches, teachers,

administrators. It's a special place. I look back at my time there and I only have good things to say.

"It's easy to look back in life and say 'What if I did this different?' or 'What if I did that?' Going back to where my head was at the time, it's tough to pinpoint a specific reason. I look back at my time at Notre Dame and I have nothing but positive memories."

LoVecchio said he also considered Boston College and Miami before choosing the Hoosiers, in part because the West Coast offense current Michigan offensive coordinator Al Borges was installing.

After a brief tryout with the New York Giants, LoVecchio turned down opportunities to play in NFL Europe in order to chase a job on Wall Street. The economics major previously worked for Merrill-Lynch and Bank of America and now is an institutional bonds trader for Wells Fargo and lives in New York.

"I look back at my athletic career, you can make so many correlations and comparisons to some of the stuff I've gone through. Football has prepared me to be able to handle a lot of the different types of adversity," said LoVecchio, 30. "There's not a day that goes by where I don't use something that's happened in the past and how it relates to it. After having played over four years of college football, you learn a lot from your experiences both on and off the field."

*A full transcript of our interview with Matt LoVecchio will be available Saturday morning at [ndsmcobserver.com](http://ndsmcobserver.com)*

Contact Matthew DeFranks at [mdefrank@nd.edu](mailto:mdefrank@nd.edu)

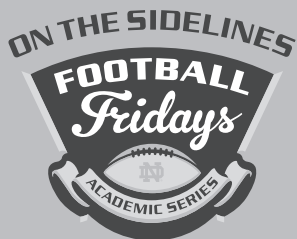
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