

# IRISH INSIDER

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INTERHALL EDITION



## BATTLE OF THE UNBEATENS

No. 1 Sorin and No. 2 Keenan meet Sunday with the title on the line.



THE OBSERVER

Photo Illustration by Suzanna Pratt and Steph Wulz

# Top two seeds face off in battle of unbeatens

By **SAMANTHA ZUBA**  
Sports Writer

It all comes down to Sunday. After a trying regular season for both teams, No. 1 Sorin and No. 2 Keenan will take the field in Notre Dame Stadium and square off for the championship.

Keenan (5-0-1) has relied on its leadership to hold a rather young team together. The Knights struggled with injuries and absences all season but found the right pieces to pull together as a team and go undefeated. Underclassmen were forced to step up into contributing roles. Several players had to switch positions or play multiple roles.

Such positional rotation could have shaken team chemistry, but senior receiver and outside linebacker Alex Green credited senior

quarterback and captain Andrew McDonough with keeping the Knights together.

"It's important to have leadership with all those pieces moving around, and Andrew McDonough has come through," Green said.

Green stressed Keenan's intangibles and ability to play as a united squad and said the Knights will need these qualities in the championship.

"We've been successful because we have team chemistry, camaraderie and leadership," Green said. "We don't want any regrets; we're going to leave it all on the field. We are going to have fun but execute what we have practiced all season."

Senior offensive lineman and defensive end Tyler Gregory said Keenan remains focused on its

one season-long goal.

"We wanted to win the championship," Gregory said. "We had one goal. Now we're one step away."

The Knights will roll out a strong receiving corps that includes Green and fellow seniors Trevor Yerrick and Nate Carr. Sorin senior running back Ryan Robinson says the Otters (6-0) will be ready with their tried-and-true strategy.

"We know Keenan has a great passing attack," Robinson said. "They have some great skill players at quarterback and receiver. We're not really going to change anything. Our defense hasn't given up too many touchdowns, so we're going to take what we have done the last couple years."

Sorin will be making its third consecutive championship game

appearance. After defeating Dillon in 2010, the Otters lost to the Big Red in the finals last season, and, according to Robinson, they are glad to be back in Notre Dame Stadium.

"We're really excited," Robinson said. "We know Keenan is a good team. This is our third year in a row making it, and the seniors want to end our careers with a winning record in the Stadium. I think it's going to be a good matchup."

Like Keenan, the Otters fought through injuries, including the devastating loss of senior captain Colin King, but Robinson lauded Sorin's ability to bounce back.

"We learned how to rally as a team," Robinson said. "I'm happy about how our outfit has come together. We're lucky we got a great freshman class. They contribute

a lot to our team, and our defense has been really sound. Our running backs have had great years."

Sorin's featured running backs are Robinson and freshman John Pearl, but Robinson said the Otters have avoided falling into the trap of a one-dimensional offense by learning how to adapt to the absence of key players.

"We have a pretty great mix between running and passing," Robinson said. "Last week, we didn't have both of our running backs, and our receivers stepped up and played really well. It's a solid mix."

It all comes down to Sunday when Keenan and Sorin face off at 3:30 p.m. in Notre Dame Stadium.

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## Senior quarterbacks lead squads to finals



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

**Keenan senior quarterback Andrew McDonough, left, and Sorin senior quarterback Ted Spinelli will vie for the championship Sunday.**

By **CASEY KARNES**  
Sports Writer

When No. 1 Sorin and No. 2 Keenan face off Sunday there will be a buzz in the air. Few are offered the chance to run out of the tunnel at Notre Dame Stadium, and only a luckier few can claim a victory on the storied field.

Both teams this year know they can draw strength and confidence from their senior quarterbacks. Keenan's Andrew McDonough and Sorin's Ted Spinelli have been key cogs in their teams' success this year.

Experience is the key word in this matchup of two of the top quarterbacks in all of interhall

football. Both are multi-year starters, but their development began at the high school level.

After playing both quarterback and linebacker in high school, Spinelli saw interhall as the next step in his career. He started at quarterback right out of the gates as a freshman for the Otters, but an injury cut that season short. Spinelli returned for his sophomore year and since then has led Sorin (6-0) to the title game in all three seasons, with one victory and a chance for a second this weekend.

In the 2010 final Spinelli connected on a game-winning pass in overtime.

"My fondest memory was definitely winning in the Stadium sophomore year," Spinelli said. "The whole dorm rushed the field, and that was a really great experience."

While last year's team was unable to pull out the victory, Spinelli said he believes his team is up for the challenge again.

"[Our experience in the championship] is good for us," Spinelli said. "We won't be intimidated. But it's still Notre Dame Stadium, so that gives everyone a big thrill."

On the other side of the ball, McDonough may lack Spinelli's championship experience, but he

took advantage of a unique opportunity last spring.

"When I studied abroad, I was able to play semi-professional football for a team in Berlin, Germany," McDonough said. "It was a great way to stay in shape, play against great competition, and continue to develop as a quarterback."

McDonough, with both his rushing and throwing ability, has led Keenan (5-0-1) to an undefeated record in his second season as a starter. After losing in the first round of the playoffs last season, McDonough said merely making the championship isn't enough for the Knights.

"We've really focused on taking each game one at a time, taking seven steps to the championship," McDonough said. "Right now we're on step seven, and we have to take the final step and win this game."

The similarities between these two quarterbacks go beyond their performance on the field and drive to win. Both signal-callers have won the respect and admiration of their teammates.

"Andrew's work ethic is unparalleled by anybody," Keenan senior defensive lineman Tyler Gregory said. "I can honestly say he cares about [Keenan football]

more than I've ever seen anyone care about a sport."

McDonough brushed off the praise, crediting his lineman and receivers for Keenan's resurgence.

"We take one man off this team, and I don't know that we'd be here," McDonough said. "It took a 24-man effort."

While Spinelli similarly gave the credit for the Otters' successful season to his teammates, they acknowledged that he was key to their success.

"He's a really good leader," Sorin junior defensive lineman Taylor Nutter said. "He's always there when you need him. He is great at bringing the team together, a good friend a good captain all together."

By fighting to recover from a regular-season neck injury that sent him to the hospital, Spinelli has demonstrated his leadership and led Sorin back to the championship. Spinelli said he will be 100 percent ready for Sunday.

As for McDonough, he is eagerly awaiting his final interhall game.

"[My fondest memory of interhall] hasn't happened yet, because it will be running through that tunnel on Sunday," McDonough said.

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**Mike Monaco**  
Interhall Editor

Defense wins championships, right? In the words of Lee Corso, not so fast my friend.

Though Sorin gave up just seven points in the regular season and has surrendered only another six in the post-season, this is Keenan's game. The Knights have been clicking on all cylinders this season and have posted 63 points behind the dynamic duo of Andrew McDonough and Jeremy Riche. Expect Keenan to put up enough points against a Sorin defense that has been stout.

Last year, the Otters' bid for back-to-back titles against Dillon was crushed when the Big Red scored a late touchdown through the air.

Look for a close game Sunday, but in the end it will be the aerial attack of McDonough and Riche that wins out.

**FINAL SCORE: Keenan 21, Sorin 14**



**Brian Hartnett**  
Interhall Editor

This matchup represents the classic meeting of the unstoppable object and the immovable force.

Keenan has tore up opposing defenses with an aggressive aerial attack, while Sorin has largely limited its opponents from crossing the goal line.

It's easy to say defense wins championships in this case, but what do you do when both teams have great defenses? Lost in the fold is the fact that Keenan's defense only allowed 13 points in the regular season.

And that is what I believe makes the difference in this game. Keenan quarterback Andrew McDonough may struggle a bit, but he will find ways to score against the Otters. On the other hand, I don't trust Sorin to do enough against the Knights' strong front seven.

**FINAL SCORE: Keenan 14, Sorin 10**

No. 2 **Keenan vs. Sorin**  
(5-0-1) (6-0)

Notre Dame Stadium

**3:30 p.m.**

# McGlinn looks to defend its title against Walsh

By **MARY GREEN**  
Sports Writer

No. 2 McGlinn had one goal entering this season: return to Notre Dame Stadium and reclaim its interhall title. After months of long practices and hard-fought games, the Shamrocks are one step away from achieving that objective. An upstart No. 4 Walsh squad, however, stands in their way and looks to capture the crown itself when the two teams meet in Sunday's championship at Notre Dame Stadium.

McGlinn (7-1) understands the pressure that comes with a high seed and the title of defending champion, Shamrocks senior captain and quarterback Emily Golden said. She said she knows this year's squad is not the same as the one that won it all last season.

"There's definitely pressure as defending champs," Golden said. "That being said, we're definitely a new team with a lot of new faces on the team, and it's a completely different mentality than it was last year."

Golden and several other key players will make their Stadium debut for the Shamrocks on

Sunday. McGlinn needs to count on strong performances from both these rookies and returning players in order to emerge with a victory, Golden said.

"We really need all of our players to have big games [to win]," Golden said. "Every single person contributes in their own way, and it's going to be huge for every person to come up big."

With a dynamic offense led by Golden and sophomore running back Emma Collis, the Shamrocks will look to put up many points Sunday. Despite McGlinn's offensive statistics, stopping the Shamrocks offense does not frighten Walsh (6-2), according to Wild Women senior captain and quarterback Kat Leach. Walsh's defense, anchored by senior co-captain and cornerback Lindy Navarre and a strong defensive line, will look to keep McGlinn off the scoreboard.

"We're going to come out and really control the game," Leach said. "We'll try to shut down their offense and come out with big points on our offense ... it's about finishing what we started."

Leach said she knew from the very beginning that this year's Walsh team was not the same



KARLA MORENO | The Observer

**Walsh senior captain and quarterback Kat Leach drops back to pass during the Wild Women's 7-6 victory over Badin on Oct. 2. Leach has led the Walsh offense as a dual-threat quarterback this season.**

squad that failed to reach the playoffs for the last two seasons. After a close 14-13 win against No. 1 Pasquerilla West in last week's semifinals, she said she knew the 2012 Wild Women were special.

"[That win] was a confirmation that we deserved to be in the stadium and that every single member of our team plays a huge part in our success," Leach said.

The quarterback believes her team's desire to win and resiliency has boosted them ahead of the competition thus far and will fuel them in their final game.

"I can tell you that no team wants it more than Walsh does," she said. "We've put in the time, we've worked our butts off and we really are just looking to prove it to everyone because we already know it ourselves."

On the McGlinn side, Golden spread a similar message.

"Just getting here was not enough," she said. "We want to take the victory."

The Shamrocks and Wild Women will face off in the championship game Sunday at 2 p.m. at Notre Dame Stadium.

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## Proven Shamrocks battle upstart Wild Women

By **ALEX WILCOX**  
Sports Writer

When No. 2 McGlinn takes the field at Notre Dame Stadium in Sunday's interhall championship, the Shamrocks may feel a slight sense of déjà vu. On the other sideline, when No. 4 Walsh takes the field, the feeling for the Wild Women may be more along the lines of 'Pinch me, I'm dreaming.'

McGlinn (7-1) and Walsh (6-2) ended last season in about as opposite a fashion as possible. Walsh won just one game and did not qualify for the playoffs, while McGlinn ran the table and took home the championship.

This year, both teams boast impressive pedigrees. McGlinn's only loss came to Pangborn early in the regular season, and it avenged that loss in last week's

semifinals to reach the championship. Walsh, meanwhile, pulled off a stunning upset when it knocked off undefeated No. 1 Pasquerilla West. The upset win for the Wild Women is symbolic of Walsh's emergence from the bottom of the standings to reach the championship game.

While McGlinn lost several key members from last year's team, Shamrocks senior cornerback Ally Scalo said she believes the championship run has helped this year's team immensely.

"We know what that felt like to be in the stadium, and we know how good it felt to win and be on such a successful team," Scalo said. "Going into this season, we knew that's what we wanted ... we didn't explicitly say it, but it was always in the back of our minds."

Walsh, meanwhile, knows

just how rare these opportunities are. The last time the Wild Women reached the playoffs was in 2009, when they were eliminated in the semifinals. After narrowly missing out on the Stadium freshman year and then experiencing two losing seasons, senior cornerback Lindy Navarre said she is ready to seize this opportunity.

"Just playing in the stadium, us seniors have wanted this since freshman year," Navarre said. "We got knocked out our freshman year and haven't come close since; I have no doubt everyone will be ready on Sunday."

While Navarre is confident her team will be ready come Sunday, she knows the Wild Women will be dealing with a lot of emotions as well.

"Everyone's beyond excited," Navarre said. "There's definitely

going to be a lot of nerves too, just playing in the Stadium, but there's going to be pure excitement."

Winning the championship comes with a lot of positives, but trying to do it again has its own set of challenges.

"There's definitely a lot of pressure," McGlinn senior receiver Katie Ritter said. "It will be hard to put that in the back of our minds, but, at the same time, we just have to have fun, play our game and stay loose."

On the other side, while Walsh embraces its underdog role, Navarre said the Wild Women also have no fear of going up against the Shamrocks.

"Our game against Pasquerilla West was at the level we need to play at," Navarre said. "We came back from being behind two scores and walking into the

stadium will be the next level. We're ready to step up to it."

Navarre said the Wild Women are downright confident they can compete with McGlinn.

"This team has more heart than I can even articulate," Navarre said. "Right now, we could catch any team off-guard because of that."

As the final game of her career approaches, Ritter said she knows how special it would be to go out with back-to-back championships.

"It would be awesome," Ritter said. "Everyone's dream is to get to the stadium, and it's just awesome to play here twice. Hopefully, we can get the win and end our careers on a high note. It's been a great four years."

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**Mike Monaco**  
Interhall Editor

Been there, done that. The Shamrocks are the defending champions and for good reason.

They have won close games when they've needed to (think a 13-12 semifinal victory over Pangborn), and they've stepped on the accelerator and put teams away at times (such as their opening-round 20-0 demolition of Badin).

They can eek out barn-burners or they can roll to blowouts. When it comes down to it, McGlinn has the experience necessary to defeat an upstart Walsh squad that has found ways to win time and again throughout the postseason.

But Sunday will be different. The Wild Women are inexperienced in the playoffs while McGlinn will not be fazed when it steps onto the hallowed ground of Notre Dame Stadium for the second consecutive season.

**FINAL SCORE: McGlinn 20, Walsh 6**



**Brian Hartnett**  
Interhall Editor

It's safe to say few could have predicted this matchup at the beginning of the season.

Defending champion McGlinn was obviously a popular preseason pick, but not much was expected from Walsh, a team that won only one game last season.

Yet the Wild Women have easily defied all expectations, relying on the stellar play of senior quarterback Kat Leach. Walsh is a disciplined team that has found a variety of ways to win this season.

But I think the Wild Women's magical season will come to a sad ending this Sunday. McGlinn has a strong senior core, valuable playoff experience and a balanced attack. Look for the Shamrocks to jump out early and hold on for a second consecutive championship.

**FINAL SCORE: McGlinn 13, Walsh 7**

No. 4 Walsh vs. McGlinn  
(6-2) (6-1)

Notre Dame Stadium

2:00 p.m.

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## DIFFERENT APPROACH SAME RESULT

No. 4 Walsh looks to continue special season by toppling No. 2 McGlinn.



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Photo Illustration by Suzanna Pratt and Steph Wulz