

IRISH INSIDER

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NOTRE DAME

THE OBSERVER

Photo Illustration by Wei Lin and Keri O'Mara

COMMENTARY

Talk can be quieted with Week One win



Isaac Lorton
Assistant Managing Editor

Much has been said about the Irish in the offseason. Now it is time to let their play speak.

The chatter has been recent, as four Irish players — three projected starters — are being held out of practices and games while the University investigates suspected academic dishonesty.

Senior receiver DaVaris Daniels, senior defensive lineman Ishaq Williams, junior cornerback KeiVarae Russell and graduate student linebacker Kendall Moore are the four who will miss Saturday's game as part of the ongoing academic investigation.

The Irish had to replace the former three immediately. Russell was a spectacular shutdown corner and almost a shoe-in captain. Williams was a solid presence on the line and would have been formidable alongside junior Sheldon Day. Daniels was Notre Dame's veteran pass-catcher with the most receptions and receiving yards on the team.

Their absences have had far-reaching implications on both sides of the ball, as they've had to be replaced with young, inexperienced players. The defense especially will be tested, early and often. Rice has a "creative" offense, as Irish head coach Brian Kelly said, and it won't be easy for a realigned defense to respond on the fly early in the season.

Under head coach Brian Kelly, Notre Dame has emphasized a "next-man-in" mentality. Sophomore defensive lineman Isaac Rochell had to step up for Williams, with a combination of players, including graduate student cornerback Cody Riggs, sophomore cornerback Cole Luke, sophomore safety Max Redfield and senior defensive back Matthias Farley, all contributing to fill in for Russell. Now only their play will show how their practice has paid off and if they are ready to tackle their new roles.

Much has been said of senior quarterback Everett Golson's return in the spring and how he has progressed as a player and a leader. There is a lot on Golson's shoulders. After the nearly-undefeated season in 2012, some are expecting him to repeat that success. However, Golson has not been in a game since the national championship against Alabama — 600 days ago. He has trained with quarterback guru George Whitfield Jr. and been through spring camp, but despite all of the training, can Golson pick up where he left off? Only Golson will be able to answer that with how he plays starting Saturday.

Much has been said of Notre Dame's young team taking on one of the toughest schedules in the country. Will the inexperienced players have it in them

to overcome opponents in away games at Florida State, USC and Arizona State, and home games against Stanford and Michigan?

The senior class is the smallest Kelly has coached in his tenure here. A large contingent of juniors and sophomores makes up the bulk of the Irish roster.

The captains were just named Tuesday night and are from three different classes. Graduate student Austin Collinsworth, seniors Cam McDaniel and Nick Martin and junior Sheldon Day will be leading the Irish. With the decision to appoint captains taking so long, is there a strong enough group of leaders or senior presence to stabilize the inexperience of a young team?

Much has been said in the offseason, but not much has been said of Rice. None of the speculation on the part of the fans and press means anything until evidence can be seen in the regular-season games, and those begin with Rice.

The Owls are no pushovers, coming off a 10-win season and a Conference USA title. Despite this fact, most of the talk has been about everything but Rice, which might concern a Notre Dame fan. Nonetheless, the talk all disappears on the field, where it is up to the Notre Dame players to worry more about the game than all of the side conversations swarming around it.

The Irish need an emphatic win to start their season to put all of this talk to rest.

Contact Isaac Lorton at ilorton@nd.edu

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

RECRUITING

Irish enter regular season with 17 commitments

By **MIKE MONACO**
Senior Sports Writer

When Notre Dame takes the field Saturday for its season opener against Rice, the program will already be off and running in the recruiting world.

The Irish have already landed 17 commitments in the class of 2015, with all pledging to Notre Dame by July 2. There's still room to add more bodies, as Irish recruiting analyst Tom Loy said he expects the class to finish with 23 members.

As for the current 17-player contingent, Loy pointed to the offensive line and the receivers as the strengths of Notre Dame's class of 2015.

"I love what they've done across the offensive line," said Loy, who covers Notre Dame recruiting for Blue and Gold Illustrated, part of the 247Sports network.

Offensive lineman Jerry Tillery, who hails from Shreveport, La., became Notre Dame's first member in the class of 2015 when he committed to the Irish on June 22, 2013. The 6-foot-5.5, 315-pounder is the No. 12 offensive tackle in the nation, according to 247Sports.

"Getting him out of LSU country ... that's big time," Loy said. "He's one of the best tackles in the country. He's got to mold his body a little bit better. He's got kind of a softness to his body right now. So when he gets in the weight room and starts working with [director of football strength and conditioning] Coach [Paul] Longo and then getting with [offensive line] Coach [Harry] Hiestand, the sky is the limit for that kid."

Center Tristen Hoge joined Tillery by the end of the 2013 calendar year. The 6-foot-5, 292-pound Hoge, whom Loy referred to as a

"brick," ranks as the top center in the nation and the No. 92 player overall, per 247Sports.

"He'll be a multi-year starter and a guy you look down the road as a captain, at least in the discussion," Loy said.

Three-star guard Trevor Ruhland rounds out the current crop of offensive lineman commits. Loy described Ruhland as a "blue-collar, hard-nosed, old-school kind of throwback player that just wants to punch you in the mouth."

"He's the perfect complement to what they got in Hoge and Tillery," Loy said.

The receivers sit three strong right now, as well, with Miles Boykin, C.J. Sanders and Jalen Guyton. The lengthy Boykin could profile as a tight end, Loy said, but the 6-foot-4, 220-pounder has underrated speed. Sanders, meanwhile, brings high-end athleticism, and Loy tabbed him as a polished receiver. Guyton, a three-star prospect from Allen, Texas, is becoming a more versatile receiver after a strong run in the state playoffs last season, according to Loy.

Notre Dame's overall class may be large in numbers, but the Irish don't have a 2015 quarterback pledge after former commitment Blake Barnett decommitted and later gave his verbal to Alabama. The seven quarterbacks among 247Sports' top 100 prospects in the class of 2015 have all committed elsewhere. Loy said it's looking as if Notre Dame will pass on a quarterback in the 2015 recruiting cycle.

"If there's a guy that emerges, they won't shy away from it," Loy said. "It does happen, those kids that come out of nowhere during their senior seasons and go on to

have great college careers, pick up offers."

In turn, the 2015 quarterback void can serve as a selling point for the Irish, Loy explained, as they target top 2016 signal-callers such as Malik Henry, Shea Patterson and Jawon Pass, all of whom rank among the top 58 players in the country, according to 247Sports.

"There's not going to be a kid right in front of you," Loy said of the possible recruiting pitch. "That's a huge selling point."

Loy said he really likes where Notre Dame stands with Patterson, the No. 25 player in the 2016 class, per 247Sports. As for Henry, currently slotted as the No. 3 overall prospect in the class, Loy said he has been told Notre Dame is running second behind Florida State. As it stands now, Henry is scheduled to visit when the Irish battle Michigan on Sept. 6, Loy said.

Michigan and Stanford are expected to be the two major home weekends for recruiting visits, Loy said. On Saturday, the Irish will host a small group of commitments, including Boykin and defensive tackle Brandon Tiasum, according to Loy.

"That's just as important as recruiting the guys that are not committed," Loy said. "You've got to keep those guys happy. Just because they're committed, obviously you know they're not signed. You can't just stop recruiting these kids."

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out BlueAndGold.com. Email Andrew Owens at aowens@blueandgold.com and tell him *The Observer* sent you.

Contact Mike Monaco at jmonaco@nd.edu

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HOSTED BY THE NOTRE DAME ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

PRESENTED BY **Sprint**

JOIN US TODAY 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Eck Visitors Center Patio, next to the Bookstore

Notre Dame family and fans are invited to enjoy a full tailgate menu, live music, and the chance to win a pair of pre-game sideline passes for Saturday. And get your picture taken at the Liberty Mutual Photo Booth.

This week's free Football Fridays events and performances include:

Noon-1:30 p.m., Nolan Ladewski
Traditional Irish tunes to set the right mood for the weekend

2-4 p.m., Professor Don Savoie
ND faculty member, specializing in soul and rhythm and blues

And the Cheerleaders and Leprechaun will stop by!

2-3 p.m., On The Sidelines Academic Series in Eck Visitors Center

Her Loyal Daughters and Sons: Exploring the Rich History of Notre Dame's Black Student Experience

Don Wycliff '69 and David Krashna '71, editors of "Black Domers," along with First Year of Studies Dean Hugh Page will discuss the evolving black student experience at ND over the last 70 years.

\$1 HOT DOGS
& other fresh food

LIVE MUSIC
performed by alumni & students

COME LEARN
talk @ 2 pm in Eck

RECONNECT
with classmates & friends

WIN PASSES
register to win pre-game sideline passes



By **MARY GREEN**
Sports Editor

"Am I having too much fun?"

Everett Golson can't help but laugh as photo after photo is snapped of him. Strapping up his helmet, tugging on the faceguard, staring into the lens like he's focusing on a receiver on 3rd-and-long — and then Golson even wants a few pictures for himself, smiling the whole time.

It's clear a career in modeling — at least one that requires keeping a straight face — might not be in the cards for the senior quarterback.

But this Everett Golson — the one who is trying to stifle a chuckle but can't help it — is leaps and bounds from the one he was a year ago.

That Golson spent Saturdays on the couch, watching his teammates struggle at times from afar while he was suspended from the team and the

University for poor academic judgement.

"It was extremely difficult," Golson said. "A lot of the times, just me being the guy I am, I kind of put that on myself immediately."

This Saturday against Rice, Golson will take the starting snaps and put on that familiar gold helmet again — this time for 80,000 fans, not just for the camera.

A lot has improved for him in the span of a year. And even more has changed for him from his breakout season two years ago.

In 2012, Everett Golson was the starting quarterback for a team whose first loss of the season came in the BCS National Championship Game.

Golson was as important to the offense as the team's other No. 5 was to the defense.

But he wasn't a leader.

Irish head coach Brian Kelly said Golson was

"spotty" in attendance and occasionally late for meetings.

In his first year seeing playing time for Notre Dame, Golson was the starting quarterback on the depth chart. But he had that privilege taken away in a game against Miami on Oct. 6, 2012, for being late to practice.

"He wasn't doing the things leaders do," Kelly said at the team's media day Aug. 19.

In Golson's defense, the 2012 squad wasn't lacking leadership, with leaders that included Heisman Trophy runner-up Manti Te'o and two-time captain Zack Martin.

"I think 2012 was a little different," Golson said. "I was a redshirt freshman. We had Manti; we had Zack; we had guys that were in that leadership role."

This year, the quarterback said he saw a hole and decided to fill it.

"For the simple fact that

we don't have as many guys — all those seniors that are now gone," he said Aug. 19. "I look up now, and I'm the senior, so I have to be the leader of this team."

Kelly said Golson emerged as a leader for other reasons.

"He said it, he didn't want the suspension to define who he was," Kelly said. "He wanted this opportunity to show that he was much more than that, and I think he's going to get that opportunity."

Irish junior defensive lineman Sheldon Day, one of Golson's best friends on the team, said he has seen Golson take a more proactive approach to his game.

"His ability to study film and to see where he made his mistakes to make sure he doesn't make them again," Day said of what makes Golson so hard to stop. "He's always asking us, 'What did you do here, what did you do there?' to make sure he doesn't make them again."

It's a big step from Golson's game in 2012, when he tended to rely on his mobility rather than a thorough knowledge of the playbook to pick up first downs.

Day said that dedication is now part of Golson's demeanor, both on the field, where he's most visible, and in the classroom, where his original mistake occurred.

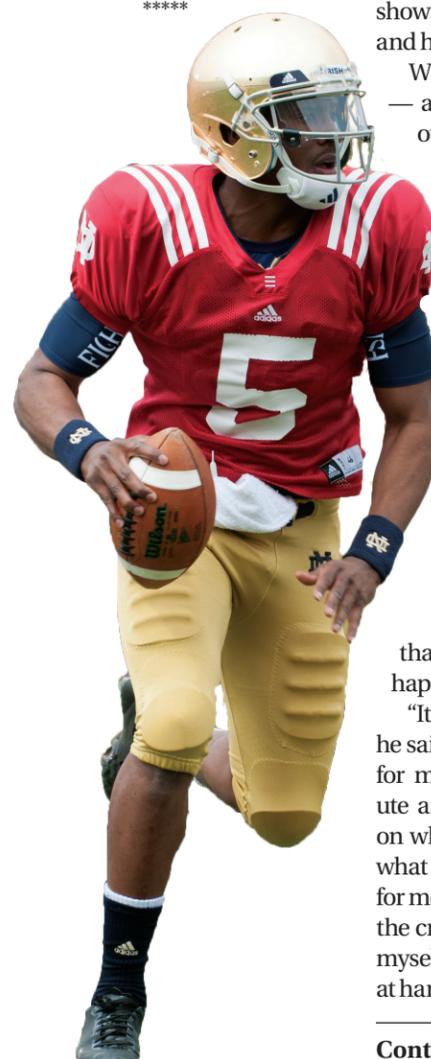
"He's committed to everything," Day said. "He's always putting his heart into everything he does now, so if it's school, he's focused on school; if it's football, he's putting his all into football."

With his tardiness and irresponsibility in the past, Golson said he now sees the value of the game he loves.

"I think it means a lot more now," he said. "I've had time to evaluate. I've had time to see different things, being away from the game."

And he readily shares his appreciation to learn and compete at Notre Dame once more.

"I'm so grateful for just the opportunity to be back here because it could have been another way," he said.



In 2012, Everett Golson had a 131.0 quarterback rating.

He averaged more than 200 yards through the air each game.

But according to his coach, he wasn't as good of a quarterback as he is now.

"He's definitely made some strides," Kelly said March 3 after Golson's first practice back from his suspension. "I think there must have been some real good teaching there that has allowed him that opportunity to come in here and have a better sense of everything."

That teaching came at the hands of George Whitfield Jr., the "quarterback guru" who made sure Golson stayed sharp in his absence.

Whitfield has worked with some of the NFL's finest quarterbacks, such as Ben Roethlisberger and Andrew Luck, and with him, Golson was able to fine-tune his skills out in California.

That's allowed him to take on a more complex offense this season, which will utilize his speed and that of his receivers.

"It's tremendously fast," Golson said. "Two years ago, we didn't run at as near a fast pace. It was more conservative, in a sense — slow the ball down, run the ball, that type of thing. Now, we want to be really aggressive on the offensive side."

That improvement has helped the Irish as a whole, Day said.

"He definitely took over the role as a leader on the offense and built them to be a better unit, and he shows that through his vocal skills and his playing," Day said.

With a small and select resume — a few videos of him working out with Whitfield, footage from this past spring and his 2012 stats — Golson has found himself on the watch lists for the Maxwell, Davey O'Brien and Walter Camp awards this season.

On Saturday, Golson's teammates, coaches and Irish fans will get their first chance to see if his much-anticipated return and much-discussed improvement will live up to the hype.

As for Golson himself?

He'll be living in the moment that he's waited for so long to happen.

"It's going to be crazy for sure," he said. "Things like that, they last for maybe 30 seconds to a minute and then you have to dial in on what's the task at hand. That's what I'm trying to prepare myself for most is just understanding that the crowd is there but also dialing myself in and performing my task at hand."

Contact Mary Green at
mgreen8@nd.edu

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Fall 2014



"Thank God for the saints whose feast days come around and remind us that we too are called to be saints."

- Dorothy Day

Saturdays with the Saints

"Mary" at Notre Dame

Mary in Art and Image on Notre Dame's campus

Lawrence S. Cunningham, O'Brien Chair of Theology, Emeritus, Notre Dame

August 30
10:30-11:30 am
Andrews Auditorium
Lower Level, Geddes Hall





CAROLINE GENCO | The Observer



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OWLS PASSING

Rice must replace quarterback Taylor McHargue, who threw for all but 150 of the Owls' nearly 2,500 passing yards a season ago. Enter redshirt junior signal-caller Driphus Jackson, who has played in 21 career games but has made only one start during his three seasons with the Owls.

Jackson has completed just 51.8 percent of his career pass attempts (44-for-85), and the Cedar Hill, Texas, native could be without his top target in preseason all-conference receiver Jordan Taylor, who is battling a sore foot. Taylor, who Brian Kelly praised this week as a strong route-runner, has made 24 career starts and has racked up 112 total receptions in the last two seasons combined.

On top of that, Rice finished 2013 with the 103rd-ranked passing offense, averaging 178.2 yards per game. Will the Owls go to the air more in 2014?

Notre Dame's pass defense certainly takes a hit without junior cornerback KeiVarae Russell, but the Irish are still deep in the secondary. Cody Riggs and Cole Luke shouldn't have too much trouble holding down the perimeter, and Devin Butler and Matthias Farley can be successful on the interior.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

OWLS RUSHING

The Owls rumbled their way to the 17th-best rushing offense in the country last season, averaging a whopping 227.4 yards per game on the ground.

But Rice loses 63 percent of that rushing production with the departures of running back Charles Ross (1,280 yards in 2013), McHargue (464) and running back Turner Peterson (262).

Sophomore Jowan Davis and redshirt sophomore Darik Dillard are listed as the co-starters at running back, and both will be called on to continue Rice's rushing success.

The Owls will go up against an inexperienced Notre Dame front seven. The Owls could find holes to exploit among a group that features five new starters. The Irish are undersized with linebackers Joe Schmidt and James Onwualu, but if they can hold up at the point of attack, Rice won't be able to run completely rampant.

EDGE: EVEN

OWLS OFFENSIVE COACHING

There's new coordinators all around this game, as Rice lost then-offensive coordinator John Reagan toward the end of last season. Kelly praised Rice's offense for its creativity and innovation in 2013, so the logical question is how much of that carries over in 2014 without Reagan steering the ship.

Quarterbacks coach Larry Edmondson and receivers coach Billy Lynch are the co-offensive coordinators, and they'll be tasked with producing a consistent unit despite new pieces at quarterback and running back, to name a few.

Irish defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder is expected to be aggressive, and if he dials up pressure and exotic looks for Jackson, the inexperienced signal-caller could be forced into poor decisions.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

OWLS SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter James Farrimond earned a spot on the Ray Gay Award preseason watch list and was a third-team preseason All-Conference USA selection, according to Athlon.

Rice added kicker James Hairston from LSU, where Hairston handled kickoff duties for three seasons, blasting 88 career touchbacks. Hairston's leg could help Rice control some of the field position battle.

The loss of Chris Boswell, an All-Conference USA second-team choice in 2013, leaves a void in the field-goal game.

EDGE: RICE

OWLS SCHEDULE (0-0)

Aug. 30 @ Notre Dame
 Sept. 13 @ Texas A&M
 Sept. 20 Old Dominion
 Sept. 27 @ Southern Miss.
 Oct. 4 Hawaii
 Oct. 11 @ Army
 Oct. 25 North Texas
 Nov. 1 @ Florida International
 Nov. 8 UTSA
 Nov. 15 @ Marshall
 Nov. 21 UTEP
 Nov. 29 Louisiana Tech

HEAD T

3:30 P.M.
 NOTRE DAME STADIUM

RICE



(R-Sr.) Jordan Taylor **15** WR
 (R-So.) Zach Wright 9

(So.) Robby Wells **88** TE
 (R-Fr.) Cole Hunt 82

(R-Sr.) Ian Gray **72** LT
 (R-So.) Brandon Dawkins 79

(So.) Jowan Davis **3** RB
 (R-So.) Darik Dillard 32

(R-Sr.) Nico Carlson **78** LG
 (R-Fr.) Kenneth Thompson 70

(R-Jr.) Driphus Jackson **6** QB
 (R-So.) Tyler Stehling 10

(R-Sr.) Matt Simonette **60** C
 (R-So.) Spencer Stanley 52

(R-Jr.) Andrew Reue **77** RG
 (R-Fr.) Peter Godber 51

(R-Jr.) Caleb Williams **75** RT
 (R-Fr.) John Poehlmann 55

(Jr.) Dennis Parks **4** WR
 (Fr.) James Mayden 2

(R-Sr.) Mario Hull **1** WR
 (R-So.) Darrion Pollard 8



(Sr.) Malcolm Hill **2** LCB
 (R-So.) Michael Warren 12

(Sr.) Jaylon Finner **25** KAT
 (Fr.) Destri White 13

(R-Sr.) Gabe Baker **27** SS
 (Jr.) Zach Espinosa 6

(R-Jr.) Brian Nordstrom **47** LE
 (Fr.) Graysen Schantz 94

(R-So.) Alex Lyons **4** SLB
 (R-Jr.) Nick Elder 46

(R-Jr.) Ross Winship **99** NT
 (R-So.) Cody Hennessee 58

(R-Jr.) Christian Covington **1** DT
 (Sr.) Dylan Klare 96

(R-Sr.) James Radcliffe **26** WLB
 (R-Fr.) Nick Uretsky 21

(Sr.) Julius White **7** FS
 (Jr.) Garrett Fuhrman 11

(R-Sr.) Zach Patt **18** RE
 (R-Fr.) Brian Womac 44

(R-Sr.) Bryce Callahan **29** RCB
 (Fr.) Jorian Clark 20



(Sr.) James Hairston **5** PK
 (R-Fr.) Taylor Knopf 7

(R-Jr.) James Farrimond **3** H
 (R-So.) Zach Wright 9

(R-Jr.) James Farrimond **3** P
 (Jr.) Luke Turner 35

(Sr.) Malcolm Hill **2** KR
 (R-Sr.) Mario Hull 1

(R-Sr.) Bryce Callahan **29** PR
 (R-Sr.) Mario Hull 1

(R-Sr.) Tanyan Farley **48** LS
 (R-Fr.) Ty Carter 64



Mike Monaco
 Senior Sports Writer



Brian Hartnett
 Managing Editor



Samantha Zuba
 Assistant Managing Editor

There hasn't been much Rice chatter of late since news broke of Notre Dame's ongoing academic investigation.

Heck, it took until around the 27-minute mark for Brian Kelly to field a question about the Owls during his Tuesday teleconference.

That's not to say the Irish are sleeping on Rice. The Owls won 10 games last season and claimed their first-ever Conference USA crown.

But Notre Dame has too much talent across the board. Everett Golson and the offense may need a moment to get going, and the defense likely will give up its share of big plays. However, the Owls could be without 6-foot-5 receiver Jordan Taylor.

The Irish will roll to a 1-0 start.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 31, Rice 17

Notre Dame hasn't dominated a true home opener since it shut out a Nevada team led by Colin Kaepernick in 2009.

Since then, the Irish have had three unremarkable home-opener wins, two over Purdue and one over Temple, and an ugly loss to South Florida.

Expect this home opener to be similar to last year's against Temple, and not just because Rice is also nicknamed the Owls.

On offense, the Irish will show flashes of brilliance and moments of ineptitude. It's to be expected from a team whose quarterback hasn't played in 600 days.

The Irish defense will show some vulnerability and reveal its lack of depth, but it should handily hold off a Rice team trying to find its identity.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 27, Rice 10

Expect an Irish win, but Rice will hang tough.

Rice has an experienced coach in David Bailiff, who starts his eighth season with the Owls.

Continuity in leadership should help the Owls settle down early and challenge a Notre Dame team dealing with a large turnover in starters.

It could take the Irish a little longer to find a rhythm in this game, particularly on offense, with Everett Golson seeing his first regular-season action in well more than a year.

The Irish defense will find a consistent stride first, but don't be surprised when the offense makes some eye-popping plays even though the game overall may look inconsistent.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 28, Rice 14

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ON NBC

NO. 17 NOTRE DAME



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CB **2** Cody Riggs (Gr.)
19 Nick Watkins (Fr.)

WLB **9** Jaylon Smith (So.)
48 Greer Martini (Fr.)

DE **98** Andrew Trumbetti (Fr.)
45 Romeo Okwara (Jr.)

S **28** Austin Collinsworth (Gr.)
41 Matthias Farley (Sr.)

DT **91** Sheldon Day (Jr.)
53 Justin Utupo (Gr.)

ILB **38** Joe Schmidt (Sr.)
5 Nyles Morgan (Fr.)

DT **94** Jarron Jones (Jr.)
75 Daniel Cage (Fr.)

S **10** Max Redfield (So.)
22 Elijah Shumate (Jr.)

DE **90** Isaac Rochell (So.)
92 Grant Blankenship (Fr.)

SLB **17** James Onwualu (So.)
31 John Turner (Jr.)

CB **36** Cole Luke (So.)
12 Devin Butler (So.)

WR **2** Chris Brown (Jr.)
7 Will Fuller (So.)

WR **3** Amir Carlisle (Sr.)
20 C.J. Prosise (Jr.)

RT **79** Steve Elmer (So.)
70 Hunter Bivin (So.)

RG **74** Christian Lombard (Gr.) **RB** **33** Cam McDaniel (Sr.)
65 Conor Hanratty (Sr.) 25 Tarean Folston (So.)
1 Greg Bryant (So.)

C **72** Nick Martin (Sr.)
75 Mark Harrell (Jr.)

QB **5** Everett Golson (Sr.)
8 Malik Zaire (So.)

LG **77** Matt Hegarty (Sr.)
75 Mark Harrell (Jr.)

LT **78** Ronnie Stanley (Jr.)
68 Mike McGlinchey (So.)

TE **18** Ben Koyack (Sr.)
80 Durham Smythe (So.)

WR **88** Corey Robinson (So.)
11 Justin Brent (Fr.)

KO **27** Kyle Brindza (Sr.)

PK **27** Kyle Brindza (Sr.)
85 Tyler Newsome (Fr.)

KR **3** Amir Carlisle (Sr.)
33 Cam McDaniel (Sr.)

P **27** Kyle Brindza (Sr.)
85 Tyler Newsome (Fr.)

LS **61** Scott Daly (Jr.)

PR **2** Cody Riggs (Gr.)
1 Greg Bryant (So.)

IRISH PASSING

This would be much closer to a landslide if the Irish had the services of senior receiver DaVaris Daniels on Saturday.

But they don't.

That means Notre Dame's active leading receiver will be junior Chris Brown, he of the 17 career receptions. Between Brown, sophomores Corey Robinson and Will Fuller, senior Amir Carlisle and junior C.J. Prosise, senior quarterback Everett Golson will have plenty of options.

The most reliable, at times, could be senior tight end Ben Koyack and the running backs.

But Golson, who will be making his first game appearance in 600 days, must face an experienced and talented Rice secondary. Kelly praised redshirt cornerback Bryce Callahan, who ranks third among returning FBS players with 11 career interceptions. In trusting Callahan, the Owls have the ability to play some man coverage on the perimeter.

Rice's defense has been improving in recent years under defensive coordinator Chris Thurmond. Between Callahan and fellow defensive backs Julius White, Gabe Baker and Malcolm Hill, the Owls start four seniors with significant prior experience. They won't be fooled easily by the Irish.

EDGE: EVEN

IRISH RUSHING

The Owls finished in the middle of the pack defensively last season against the run, allowing 161.4 yards per contest.

Notre Dame must really zero in on containing Owls defensive tackle Christian Covington, who led the team with 11.5 tackles for loss last year as a sophomore. Covington is a preseason third-team All-American, according to Phil Steele, and a consensus preseason all-conference choice. Kelly said Covington will be one of the better players Notre Dame faces all season long and praised his physicality and constant activity.

But Notre Dame's running backs are more than a one-man band. In fact, they form a three-headed monster. Expect senior Cam McDaniel and sophomores Greg Bryant and Tarean Folston all to make

plays in the season opener. It will be interesting to see how the rotation shakes out and if Kelly and Irish offensive coordinator Mike Denbrock elect to ride the hot hands at certain times.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

Denbrock is in his first season as the team's offensive coordinator, but Kelly will be the one calling the plays Saturday. The Irish are looking to play faster offensively, and Kelly has personnel that fits his ideal.

Much of Notre Dame's offensive success will come down to its performance in the red zone. The Irish have struggled there in recent years, but Notre Dame thinks it has found some answers.

Don't look past Thurmond defensively. The fourth-year coordinator has had the Owls causing turnovers and limiting points, as Rice finished with the No. 42 scoring defense in the country in 2013.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

It'd be difficult for Notre Dame's special teams to be worse in 2014, especially as it relates to kick coverage and punt returns.

Kelly thinks the Irish have found some answers in both those areas, but until they become apparent, there's ample reason to doubt the Irish on special teams.

Keep an eye, however, on new return men Cody Riggs and Greg Bryant (punts) and Amir Carlisle (kicks). They could add needed life.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH SCHEDULE (0-0)

Aug. 30 **Rice**
Sept. 6 **Michigan**
Sept. 13 **vs. Purdue**
Sept. 27 **Syracuse**
Oct. 4 **Stanford**
Oct. 11 **North Carolina**
Oct. 18 **@ Florida State**
Nov. 1 **vs. Navy**
Nov. 8 **@ Arizona State**
Nov. 15 **Northwestern**
Nov. 22 **Louisville**
Nov. 29 **@ USC**



Isaac Lorton
Assistant Managing Editor



Mary Green
Sports Editor

There are a lot of question marks concerning Notre Dame, but none of them will be large enough to garner a Rice victory.

The Irish are inexperienced on defense, which could be worrisome against Rice's creative offense, but this defensive group is probably the fastest and most athletic South Bend has seen in years.

The offense is fine. Brian Kelly will be calling the shots and finally has the personnel to run the system he came here to implement. With a solid line and talented backfield and receiving corps, the offense will produce. The Irish will give up some points to Rice due to the learning curve, but the offense will out-produce that of the Owls.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 34, Rice 24

Rice had more wins than Notre Dame last season. Rice won its conference for the first time in program history last season. But when Rice comes to Notre Dame Stadium on Saturday to open this season, the on-the-rise program won't walk away with a win.

That's not to say the Owls won't hang with the Irish — this is a squad that bested its opponents by an average of two touchdowns per game in 2013. It'll take a series or two for the Notre Dame offense to get into rhythm, so the first quarter won't be the blowout Irish faithful expect.

But once Everett Golson finds his groove and the trio of running backs picks up a few big gains, Notre Dame will be rocking like it's 2012.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 34, Rice 20

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2014

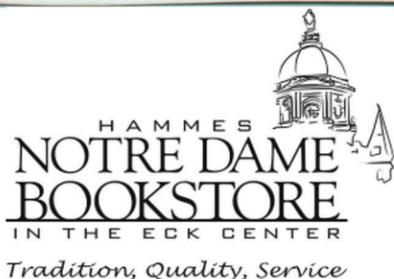
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JUST IN!



Linebackers look to build on legacy

By **BRIAN HARTNETT**
Managing Editor

Two seasons ago, Notre Dame's linebacker corps featured a Heisman-trophy runner-up in Manti Te'o, an aggressive pass rusher in Prince Shembo, a versatile defender in Danny Spond and a platoon of experienced seniors in Carlo Calabrese and Dan Fox.

Now, the Irish linebacker position two-deep encompasses the team's most highly-touted sophomore, a former walk-on, a duo of former secondary players and two true freshmen.

If that change is not enough, the Irish linebackers also have picked up a new defensive scheme in the offseason, switching primarily from a 3-4 to a 4-3 defense under new defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder.

While such changes may seem daunting, Irish senior linebacker Joe Schmidt said they've put him and his fellow position players in a position to succeed.

"You could put any player in [the new defense]," Schmidt said. "It provides excellent opportunities for player X. Whatever player we put in that situation is going to be successful, I think."

Schmidt is the former walk-on of the group, having earned

a scholarship after his sophomore season. He appeared in all 13 games last year and after being described by head coach Brian Kelly as "the leader on our defense" in the spring, is expected to start at inside linebacker against Rice on Saturday.

Schmidt said he relishes his role as the so-called leader of the linebackers.

"It's just kind of my personality to drive," he said. "For me, it's always been just natural, that, 'Hey, this is what I'm seeing,' and I just help direct traffic out there. I'm always screaming — I've got a really loud voice — and I'm always telling people what I see."

Although Schmidt has received accolades from his coaches, much of the outside praise has gone to sophomore Jaylon Smith, who recorded 67 tackles and started every game at outside linebacker in his freshman season. Smith has been named to five national award watch lists, including the Bednarik Award, presented to the best defensive college football player in the country.

"[Smith] has very good football intellect, and he's a very natural player," outside linebackers coach Bob Elliott said at the team's media day Aug. 19. "One thing that's interesting about



WEI LIN | The Observer

Irish senior linebacker Joe Schmidt, right, celebrates with sophomore linebacker Jaylon Smith during last season's 14-10 win over USC. Schmidt and Smith will start at linebacker for the Irish in 2014.

Jaylon is that he's so flexible and athletic that he can get his body into a bad position and still get out of it and make a very good play."

Expected to play alongside Schmidt and Smith is sophomore James Onwualu, who made stops at receiver and safety before transitioning to the linebacker position. Onwualu's projected backup is another convert, junior John Turner, who entered Notre Dame as a safety.

"They're willing to do anything," Schmidt said of Onwualu and Turner. "They switched

positions, which is a humbling experience. ... It was pretty cool seeing the growth and the maturation process for both those players, and they're guys who are going to have a great impact this year."

Freshmen Nyles Morgan and Greer Martini are also listed on the linebacker two-deep chart. Other potential starters at the position include seniors Jarrett Grace, who continues to recover from a broken leg suffered last season, and Ben Councill.

Schmidt conceded that it will be tough to replace the leadership

lost at the linebacker position. But he admitted that he and his teammates are ready to make their own impact.

"Those guys in the past built an awesome foundation for us," Schmidt said. "Those guys who were there with them, ... we grew up in that system with those older guys, so we're building on that and putting our own twist on it. It's not replacing anything. It's building everything on top of the foundation, a very solid rock."

Contact **Brian Hartnett** at bhartnet@nd.edu

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SATURDAY SCHOLAR SERIES

A different game plan for autumn weekends from the College of Arts and Letters

You are invited to join in discussion with some of Notre Dame's most engaging faculty in the Saturday Scholar Series on "home game" Saturdays. Each lecture and Q&A, sponsored by the College of Arts and Letters, is presented in the Snite Museum's Annenberg Auditorium at 12 noon, unless otherwise noted. No tickets required.

Jerusalem's Future: Peace or Apocalypse

Atalia Omer

Associate Professor of Religion, Conflict and Peace Studies, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies; Department of Sociology

Jerusalem is considered holy and sacred within the three Abrahamic religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is for many a symbol of eternal peace but also a source of earthly violence. This talk will examine why we should reflect on the meanings people have attached to Jerusalem as we try to understand the current violence in Gaza.

12 Noon
Saturday, August 30, 2014

Snite Museum's Annenberg Auditorium

Lecture and Q&A free and open to the public. No tickets required.

 UNIVERSITY OF
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☞ 8.30.14 (vs. Rice)

Jerusalem's Future: Peace or Apocalypse?

Atalia Omer, Associate Professor of Religion, Conflict and Peace Studies, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies; Department of Sociology

☞ 9.6.14 (vs. University of Michigan) 7:30 p.m. game; 4 p.m. lecture

The Empty Chair by the Hearth: Archaeological Insights into Irish-America

Ian Kuijt, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Anthropology

☞ 10.4.14 (vs. Stanford University)

Online Learning and the Future of Higher Education

Elliott Visconsi, Chief Academic Digital Officer, Office of the Provost; Associate Professor, Department of English; Concurrent Associate Professor of Law

☞ 10.11.14 (vs. North Carolina)

Evolution, Humans and Other Animals: Theology and Anthropology in Dialogue

Celia Deane-Drummond, Professor, Department of Theology

☞ 11.15.14 (vs. Northwestern)

What's All the Fuss about Digital Humanities?

Matt Wilkens, Assistant Professor, Department of English

☞ 11.22.14 (vs. Louisville)

Beyond Civility: Addressing the Crisis in American Public Discourse

John Duffy, The O'Malley Director of the University Writing Program; Associate Professor, Department of English

To view the entire Saturday Scholars Series visit: saturdayscholar.nd.edu

GAME DAY

PEP RALLY

SOUTH QUAD in front of ROCKNE MEMORIAL
CONCERT featuring ND ALUM PAT McKILLEN STARTS at 4:45 PM
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BEGINS at the GUG, ENDS at the STADIUM TUNNEL
FIND THE ROUTE at GAMEDAY.ND.EDU
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ND vs RICE

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