

IRISH INSIDER

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2015



A FINE LINE

Notre Dame's defensive front balances fun off the field with intensity on it

THE **OBSERVER**

Photo Illustration by Erin Rice and Zach Llorens



COMMENTARY

Notre Dame still needs to put forth a complete effort



EMMET FARNAN | The Observer

Irish senior running back C.J. Prosise pulls away from Georgia Tech redshirt senior defensive back Chris Milton during his 91-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter of Notre Dame's 30-22 win Saturday.



Zach Klonsinski
Sports Editor

Despite all the questions about how the Irish would fare with sophomore DeShone Kizer as their starting quarterback, the Notre Dame offense passed its first big test.

A strong performance against Georgia Tech essentially put the game away before the fourth quarter until the hiccups in the final minutes. Senior running back C.J. Prosise nearly eclipsed 200 yards and scampered for the longest Irish run in the history of Notre Dame Stadium. Junior receiver Will Fuller continued piling up yards, touchdowns and Heisman ballots. And Kizer, for the most part, managed to guide the machine and hang on to the football.

The scary thing, though? The Irish offense is far from clicking on all cylinders yet.

But the even scarier thought, for opposing teams and the Irish faithful alike?

Neither is the defense.

The offense left some points on the board against the Yellow Jackets on Saturday, most notably Kizer and junior receiver Corey Robinson failing to be on the same page in the end zone late midway the second quarter. Kizer threw the fade route to the back pylon, but Robinson read Yellow Jacket senior cornerback D.J. White jumping the fade route and stayed inside. White came away with the interception. Irish head coach Brian Kelly said Tuesday there were errors on both ends of the pass: a bad read by Zaire and the failure of Robinson to stick

to the timing route.

Following the interception, the Yellow Jacket offense marched 80 yards in four plays to tie the game at seven after managing only 44 yards on its first four drives combined.

To the Irish offense's credit, it responded with a long touchdown drive of its own to reclaim the advantage, 13-7. The defense forced a three-and-out and got the offense the ball again at its own 30-yard line with 1:07 on the clock and the chance to seize momentum back going into halftime.

Then freshman tight end Alize Jones fumbled, and Georgia Tech got the ball on the Notre Dame 45-yard line with 47 seconds and one timeout left in what could have been a disastrous end of the half for the Irish. Instead the Irish defense held, and the Yellow Jackets missed a field-goal attempt.

Despite these miscues and a few drops from Irish receivers, Notre Dame's offense didn't miss a beat with Kizer calling the shots.

What should have Notre Dame fans terrified, however, is the defensive inconsistency that again reared its ugly head this season.

Against Texas, the Irish defense was nearly perfect, only allowing one big play that set up the Longhorns' only score of the game.

The next week in Virginia, however, it was anything but polished as it was picked apart by a sub-par Cavalier offense, needing Kizer and Fuller's heroics to bail it out.

For 53 minutes last Saturday, the Notre Dame defense again looked like nothing could faze it, holding the explosive Yellow

Jacket offense to a total of 151 yards on 11 drives, outside of the 80-yard scoring drive following the interception.

Then suddenly the wheels came off: It looked like the defense just quit, thinking it had the game was already won.

see KLONSINSKI PAGE 5

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KEEPING IT ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

By **ALEX CARSON**
Associate Sports Editor

Before the 2015 season even started, senior defensive lineman Sheldon Day introduced the world to Terry Jillery.

Never mind the fact there isn't a player by that name on the Irish roster.

"Yeah, they flipped the letters of my name," freshman defensive lineman Jerry Tillery said during Sept. 8's episode of Showtime's 'A Season With Notre Dame.' "I don't get it. It's kind of stupid to me."

And while he introduced the nickname to the world in August, Day didn't invent it, he said — that honor is shared between senior Romeo Okwara and junior Isaac Rochell.

"I think Isaac and Romeo came up with the name, and Jerry just kinda blew it off a couple times, and it just kinda stuck with him," the senior captain said. "He would mess up on a play and we'd be like, 'Alright, Terry,' or he'd do something good and be like, 'Alright, Terry.' It just kinda stuck after a while."

Tillery said the kidding doesn't bother him all that much. He endured plenty of that in his childhood.

"I grew up with three older sisters, so that's nothing new to me, being teased and picked on," Tillery said. "... I understand it's all in good fun; we're having fun with each other."

It's the personal side of Notre Dame's defensive line the world sees: a bunch that always tries to stay on the bright side.

"We do have fun, we have a great time," Rochell said. "We also have our very serious times, so I think you have to enjoy it while doing it; it's such a long season."

Day, now in his second year as a captain for the Irish, sees the fun the group has as the best way to reach its goals.

"We expect the highest out of people, and if we can't be positive around them, how can we get the best out of them?" the Indianapolis native said. "We definitely promote a positive attitude in the D-line room."

And for the members of the Irish defensive line, the best they can be means being the top unit in the sport.

"We're trying to be the

best D-line in the country," Okwara said. "We go to practice with the mindset every day that we have to dominate whoever we're playing, so I think it's coming together as a defense, that's what we do."

"I don't think there's a reason why we can't be [the best D-line]," Rochell said. "I think if we don't end up being the best D-line in the country, it's because we weren't trying to or we were being lazy."

"We have a lot of potential but I was just telling them my dad used to always say, 'Potential and a quarter can get you a cup of coffee.' Potential really doesn't mean anything. We have potential, we just have to keep grinding."

Tillery and Okwara said Day, the two-time captain, is the undisputed leader of the unit.

"He's shown me the way," Tillery said. "He's been where I want to be, he's going where I want to go. He knows the position in and out, and that's where I want to be."

"Just his mindset [is big]," Okwara said of Day. "Going to practice every day, working on his tools. Not taking any breaks on any snaps. Going into the practice with the mindset he has to dominate every game."

Day, who missed the Louisville and USC games last year with a knee injury, said the toughest part of his captaincy was learning to lead off the field.

"Low points — I would definitely say not being out there leading them because I was more of a lead-by-example guy," Day said. "So I had to sit back and observe and learn how to talk to the players and see how I could communicate with them."

"But the highs, just seeing people watch me work and seeing how much they look up to me and mimic me — I just try and be a leader and try to hold everyone accountable."

While the defensive linemen have fun with each other, they also enjoy their time on the field running defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder's ever-changing schemes.

"We definitely love him, especially running his defense, an NFL-style defense," Okwara said. "It's a lot of fun, and BVG comes to practice

every day with an intensity we love. We love being around him, so we love playing for him."

"He always switches everything up, you always have to keep on your toes," Rochell said. "... He's really aggressive, so it's fun to play under his system."

For most of the offseason, it appeared as if the starting four on the line would be easy to call — but when senior Jarron Jones went down with a season-ending MCL injury in fall camp, the mixture changed.

"It was definitely a very down moment for the D-line," Day said. "We lost a brother, especially someone who was trying to come back from an injury to then have another one, it was definitely hard for us."

Jones had missed the end of the last season with a foot injury, but was back on track to return to the starting lineup for the 2015 campaign.

"I just hated it for him because he just came back, he worked really hard over the offseason to make a comeback, so it was tough to see him go down," Rochell said.

But there wasn't time to sulk about the injury, Okwara said.

"It's obviously very devastating when any of our teammates go down, but ... we can't dwell on the past," Okwara

said. "The next guy steps in and does the same job Jarron did."

For the Irish, the 'next guy in' became two: Tillery and sophomore Daniel Cage.

"We looked to Jerry and Cage and kind of uplifted them to make sure they played at the same level Jarron did," Day said.

"We always have a lot of confidence in our guys that are next, the next man in, so we didn't really stress that much," Rochell said. "We knew those guys had to come in and play at a higher level."

"Jerry had to come in and play like a junior or senior, he couldn't play like a freshman, and he's done well. Initially it was tough, and it was sad because you love Jarron, but we weren't stressed over the next guys in."

For Tillery, it was far from obvious he'd end up a defensive lineman at Notre Dame; he was considered by most a prospect on the other side of the ball along the offensive line.

"The opportunity presented itself to move to defense and I took it," the freshman said. "I haven't looked back."

Tillery said the opportunity to contribute early helped him make the decision to move to the defensive line.

"I just wanted to help the team however I could, and I

felt this was the way to do it the fastest," Tillery said. "It's worked out for me."

Okwara said the success Tillery and Cage have had boils down to their work ethic on the practice field.

"When [Tillery] came here in the spring, there were a lot of things he had to work on," Okwara said. "And I think he picked it up pretty well. Obviously in a starting role now, he has a lot on his plate, and I think he's doing a great job of coming to practice every day and working on the things he needs to work on to be a better player."

"Daniel's the same way. He comes to practice with the same mindset, that he has things to work on. He also has a lot on his plate like Jerry, sharing the starting role."

"They know they have to come to practice every day and work hard so they can play like we expect them to."

Okwara started his career as a linebacker in former defensive coordinator Bob Diaco's 3-4 set but moved to the defensive line when VanGorder took over before last season. It's a move Okwara seems to be enjoying.

"I love the D-line," he said. "I don't care, put me anywhere, but I'm loving the D-line."

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CHRIS COLLINS | The Observer

Irish senior defensive lineman Sheldon Day, left, and junior defensive lineman Isaac Rochell pursue Texas redshirt freshman quarterback Jerrod Heard during Notre Dame's 38-3 victory over the Longhorns.

RECRUITING

Notre Dame scheduled to host three-star linebacker

By **BRIAN PLAMONDON**
Sports Writer

Although the commitment front has been quiet since three-star quarterback Ian Book pledged to the Irish in early August, Notre Dame is staying busy on the recruiting trail.

This past weekend, Irish coaches rolled out the red carpet for Maryland outside linebacker Aaron Hansford, the lone official visitor and a four-star talent per Rivals.com.

"I think when there's only one official visitor, it opens the door for the whole staff to get involved," Irish recruiting analyst Andrew Ivins said. "If you're going to do an in-season official visit, it's a huge advantage to be the only guy on campus because ... you're going to be the [main focus]."

Ivins, who covers Notre Dame recruiting for Blue and Gold Illustrated, said Notre Dame has solidified itself as a school that's going to be in the race down the stretch for the linebacker — especially because Hansford's father is a huge Notre Dame fan. Hansford is also high on Oregon, Michigan State, UCLA and Florida, according to Ivins.

Now the Irish staff will quickly shift its attention to the only scheduled visitor for this weekend's game against Massachusetts, three-star linebacker Jonathan Jones, who hails from Orlando, Florida. Although Jones is Rivals' 17th-best inside linebacker, he is a player with a lot of upside, Ivins said.

"The knack on Jonathan is that he's a little undersized," Ivins said of the 6-foot, 207-pound Jones. "But he's athletic and can play inside or outside. He might not have a lot of stars next to his name,

but in terms of a program fit, he seems like another one of those guys that the staff is after."

Both Jones and Hansford would fill a huge need for Notre Dame at the linebacker position. Another position starting to show itself as one of need is at running back. After taking two in from the class of 2015, the Irish already have 6-foot-1, 212 pound bruiser Tony Jones committed for next year. Jones, a three-star prospect per Rivals, was thought to be the only running back the Irish would take.

"It's going to be hard for them to take two this cycle, but I think with the Folston injury, it's more and more of a realistic possibility," Ivins said.

Including Folston, the Irish currently only have three running backs on scholarship after the highly touted Greg Bryant departed before the season started. One name to watch to see if Notre Dame gets involved is three-star Miami commit Travis Homer, Ivins said.

For now, the Irish will make do with Jones and a recruiting class that totals 14 players. Although it is a crop that lacks a nationally recognized top talent, Ivins said he believes a number of current commits will move up in the Rivals rankings with strong showings thus far in their senior seasons.

"Chase Claypool, the Canadian wide receiver and safety, had a great start to his season," Ivins said of the four-star talent and Rivals' 196th best player. "He's already scored six touchdowns through two games, but obviously there's some questionable competition level there in Canada."

Notre Dame's other wide

receiver commit, Kevin Stepherson, might be a name to watch as well, according to Ivins. In his most recent game for Jacksonville (Fla.) First Coast, the three-star Stepherson hauled in four passes for 79 yards and two touchdowns.

Finally, New York native Jamir Jones has also impressed. Brother of current Notre Dame defensive lineman Jarron Jones, Jamir is a three-star talent and the second-best player in New York, per Rivals.

"He's listed as a linebacker, but I think he ultimately ends up at defensive end," Ivins said. "He had a great start to his season, a few sacks here and there."

"Those are all guys that I think Notre Dame should be excited about and are guys that have really turned up this early in the season."

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 Brian Plamondon at bplamond@nd.edu



Photo courtesy of Blue and Gold Illustrated, Rivals.com

Three-star linebacker Jonathan Jones will be visiting campus this weekend. He is the only official visitor scheduled against Massachusetts.

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EMMET FARNAN | The Observer

Irish graduate student linebacker Joe Schmidt, right, dives in an attempt to tackle Georgia Tech redshirt junior quarterback Justin Thomas during Notre Dame's 30-22 win at Notre Dame Stadium on Saturday. Schmidt led the Irish defense with 10 tackles, including two for a loss.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Just 122 yards, two touchdowns and an onside kick later, Notre Dame needed a sliding onside-kick recovery by junior receiver Torii Hunter Jr. to preserve the unsettlingly close 30-22 victory.

Sure, up 30-7 with seven minutes remaining against a triple-option offense is a pretty strong position to be in.

But the Notre Dame defense lost sight of Georgia Tech's explosiveness and opened the floodgates for a team that put up 134 points in its first two games this season.

The Irish got complacent, just as they had against Virginia two weeks earlier. They lost the fire and hunger that drove them against Texas and the first 53 minutes of the game last weekend.

Now the is, which defense shows up this weekend against Massachusetts?

At first glance, it appears to be an easy Irish win. Of course, there never seems to be such a thing for Notre Dame.

Two weeks after the Irish secondary failed to contain Virginia's Matt Johns and Canaan Severin, the duo they face this week will pose an even greater challenge. UMass is based around a strong passing game led by graduate student quarterback Blake Frohnaphel and senior receiver Tajae Sharpe.

Sharpe hauled in the 10th-most receiving yards last season in all of the FBS, and he's already piled up 294 yards on 22 catches this year. Frohnaphel finished 22nd overall in passing yards last season — despite not playing a bowl game or the final two games of the regular season due to injury.

In short: They love to tear defenses to shreds when given the opportunity.

UMass sets up as a perfect trap game, sandwiched between Georgia Tech and a huge test in Death Valley against Clemson, so in hindsight, the final minutes against Georgia Tech may have been the most important part of that game moving forward: The defense needs to use it as inspiration to come out with its hair on fire Saturday afternoon.

If it doesn't, the Irish could be in for a stressful — and potentially catastrophic — day at Notre Dame Stadium.

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



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MINUTEMEN PASSING

The Minutemen’s best offensive weapon is graduate student quarterback Blake Frohnapfel. In two games this season, he has thrown 618 yards and four touchdowns. And that’s a continuation of last season, when he averaged 334.5 yards per game and tossed 23 scores in 10 games. The Minutemen rely on him heavily, with nearly half their offense coming through the air so far this year.

His list of targets is thin. Senior receiver Tajae Sharpe has caught 22 passes this season for 294 yards and is climbing up the program record books. After him, though, the next closest receiver has 125. Senior Rodney Mills is listed as a fullback on the Massachusetts depth chart, but he has two touchdowns and 104 yards on just five catches.

Notre Dame, on the other hand, should have junior safety Max Redfield back from injury to reclaim his starting spot after sophomore Drue Tranquill took it against Georgia Tech. The Yellow Jackets didn’t test the Irish secondary last week until the game was out of reach, and Virginia exposed several weaknesses two weeks ago, so it is unclear how the unit will respond to its first legitimate passing threat of the year.

EDGE: EVEN

MINUTEMEN RUSHING

Georgia Tech’s triple-option attack was supposed to present the biggest challenge of the year for Notre Dame’s front seven. Instead, the Yellow Jackets managed just 216 yards on 47 attempts. The Irish held them to three conversions on 15 third downs. Sheldon Day had four tackles, one for loss, and two quarterback hits, while the linebacker corps of graduate student Joe Schmidt, junior Jaylon Smith and sophomore Greer Martini went one through three to lead the team in tackles.

The possibility of a letdown against the Minutemen is minimal. Redshirt senior Jamal Wilson hasn’t averaged more than 40 yards per game in his career, and overall, UMass ranks 121st out of 127 in the FBS in rushing offense. That’s only slightly better than its 112th position last year.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

MINUTEMEN OFFENSIVE COACHING

This is the biggest game in program history for Mark Whipple and the Minutemen. They are four-touchdown underdogs and only a few years removed from the FCS.

Notre Dame is only playing this game because Whipple’s predecessor, Charley Molnar, was Brian Kelly’s longtime offensive coordinator. But Molnar is gone, and in his absence, the Massachusetts offense jumped from 11.7 points per game to 27.3 in a single season. The Minutemen also posted their best FBS record last year at 3-9 and hung tough against Temple last week. But UMass did lose to Temple because of a blocked extra point.

For Notre Dame, Brian VanGorder’s defense was well prepared last week for the nation’s most prolific offense in Georgia Tech.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

MINUTEMEN SPECIAL TEAMS

Perhaps the most untested unit of the team, the Minutemen’s special teams have done almost nothing in 2015 through two games. Senior returner Trey Dudley-Giles has no punt returns to his name. On kickoffs, the team is averaging under 20 yards per return. Senior kicker Blake Lucas has attempted one 34-yard field goal, which he made.

Just about the only area where Massachusetts gets plenty of work is punting. Redshirt sophomore punter Logan Laurent has 14 punts and an average of 40 yards. Only two of his kicks have ended inside the 20-yard line. Notre Dame has been pretty awful on special teams this year, but against Massachusetts, the Irish could pass for competent.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

MINUTEMEN SCHEDULE (0-2)

Sept. 12 @ Colorado (L 48-14)
Sept. 19 Templer (L 25-23)
Sept. 26 @ Notre Dame
Oct. 3 FIU
Oct. 10 @ Bowling Green
Oct. 17 Kent State
Oct. 24 Toledo
Oct. 31 @ Ball State
Nov. 7 Akron
Nov. 14 @ Eastern Michigan
Nov. 21 Miami (Ohio)
Nov. 27 @ Buffalo

HEAD T

NOTRE DAME STADIUM

MASSACHUSETTS



(r-So.) Shakur Nesmith 19 WR
(Sr.) Jalen Williams 80

(r-Sr.) Brandon Howard 85 TE
(r-Jr.) A.J. Doyle 15

(r-Jr.) Tyrell Smith 77 LT
(Jr.) Tyshon Henderson 76

(r-Sr.) Jamal Wilson 6 RB
(Jr.) Shadrach Abrokwhah 22

(Gr.) Blake Frohnapfel 7 QB
(r-So.) Austin Whipple 3

(Sr.) Rodney Mills 33 FB
(So.) Andrew Libby 37

(Sr.) Matt Sparks 78 C
(r-Sr.) Josh Bruns 55

(r-Jr.) Michael Boland 71 RG
(r-Fr.) Dan DiNicola 67

(Jr.) Elijah Wilkinson 68 RT
(Sr.) Ryan Johnson 70

(Sr.) Tajae Sharpe 1 WR
(Sr.) Bernard Davis 88



(r-Sr.) Randall Jette 4 LCB
(r-Sr.) DuVaughn Beckford 36

(Sr.) Joe Colton 25 OLB
(So.) Zeke Edmonds 2

(Sr.) Trey Dudley-Giles 9 S
(r-So.) Jesse Monteiro 27

(r-Sr.) Trey Seals 54 DE
(Jr.) Enock Asante 60

(Sr.) Jovan Santos-Knox 17 ILB
(r-So.) Shane Huber 8

(Sr.) Robert Kitching III 92 NT
(r-Fr.) Jake Largay 79

(r-Jr.) John Robinson-Woodgett 42 ILB
(r-So.) Steve Casali 34

(Sr.) Khary Bailey-Smith 21 S
(r-Fr.) Charan Singh 24

(Jr.) Peter Angeh 5 DT
(r-So.) Sha-Ki Holines 95

(Sr.) Kassan Messiah 3 OLB
(Jr.) Peter Ngobidi 44

(Sr.) Kelton Brackett 1 RCB
(Fr.) James Oliphant 48



(Sr.) Blake Lucas 23 PK
(r-So.) Logan Laurent 99

(Gr.) Blake Frohnapfel 7 H
(r-Fr.) Andrew Verboys 18

(r-So.) Logan Laurent 99 P
(Sr.) Blake Lucas 23

(Sr.) Trey Dudley-Giles 9 KR
(Fr.) James Oliphant 48

(Sr.) Trey Dudley-Giles 9 PR
(Fr.) James Oliphant 48

(r-Fr.) Nick Berus 53 LS
(Fr.) Peter Comaroto 59



Greg Hadley
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Assistant Managing Editor



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Sports Editor

Nothing about this game will be close, except maybe the score.

On paper, Notre Dame should blow out the Minutemen in one of the easiest wins of the Brian Kelly era. The talent gap between the two squads is almost embarrassing. DeShone Kizer is at home for his second start and should be getting comfortable. C.J. Prosise will run wild against a relatively small front seven. The Irish defense will have a field day against an offense that is miles behind Georgia Tech’s triple option.

But all that being said, Notre Dame has a unique ability to make things more exciting than they should be. See: the final minute against Georgia Tech. So the Minutemen may hang around just enough to make Irish fans uneasy.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 34, Massachusetts 10

Brian Kelly said this type of game, a “trap game” that has the temptation to be overlooked, makes him nervous.

If the Notre Dame that handily defeated Georgia Tech in all facets of the game last week shows up Saturday, his nerves will be for nothing. But if the Notre Dame that traveled to Charlottesville, Virginia, two weeks ago is the one that runs through the tunnel against the Minutemen, he might be on to something since the Irish can exhibit a tendency to play to the level of their opponents — in this case, barely out of the FCS.

But that shouldn’t be the case. The Irish might be looking forward to next week’s matchup against Clemson, but if C.J. Prosise and the defensive line have half the performance they did last week, they’ll be fine, and so will Notre Dame.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 37, Massachusetts 10

Massachusetts is going to be a tougher game than many Irish faithful would like to think.

The Minutemen took Temple to the wire last week, the same Owls team that walloped Penn State in the opening week of the season. UMass head coach Mark Whipple has a successful track record at the school. Graduate student quarterback Blake Frohnapfel did lead the NCAA in passing last season, and the Irish pass defense has looked vulnerable at times already this season.

With Clemson on Notre Dame’s schedule next week, this has all the makings of a trap game for the Irish. And it would have been if last week’s final minute hadn’t happened.

Notre Dame clears the taste of the Georgia Tech finish out of its mouth, however, and runs away with it.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 45, Massachusetts 20

0 HEAD

3:30 P.M. ON NBC

NO. 6 NOTRE DAME



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RCB **6 KeiVarae Russell** (Sr.)
12 Devin Butler (Jr.)

WLB **9 Jaylon Smith** (Jr.)
4 Te'von Coney (Fr.)

DE **45 Romeo Okwara** (Sr.)
98 Andrew Trumbetti (So.)

S **22 Elijah Shumate** (Sr.)
29 Nicky Baratti (Sr.)

DT **91 Sheldon Day** (Sr.)
93 Jay Hayes (So.)

MLB **38 Joe Schmidt** (Gr.)
5 Nyles Morgan (So.)

DT **75 Daniel Cage** (So.)
99 Jerry Tillery (Fr.)

DE **90 Isaac Rochell** (Jr.)
55 Jonathan Bonner (So.)

S **40 Max Redfield** (Jr.)
41 Matthias Farley (Gr.)

SLB **17 James Onwualu** (Jr.)
48 Greer Martini (So.)

LCB **36 Cole Luke** (Jr.)
24 Nick Coleman (Fr.)

WR **7 Will Fuller** (Jr.)
86 Equanimeous St. Brown (Fr.)

TE **13 Tyler Luatua** (So.)
82 Nic Weishar (So.)

RT **68 Mike McGlinchey** (Jr.)
75 Mark Harrell (Sr.)

RG **79 Steve Elmer** (Jr.)
62 Colin McGovern (Jr.)

RB **20 C.J. Prosise** (Sr.)
33 Josh Adams (Fr.)

C **72 Nick Martin** (Gr.)
53 Sam Mustipher (So.)

QB **14 DeShone Kizer** (So.)
12 Brandon Wimbush (Fr.)

LG **56 Quenton Nelson** (So.)
71 Alex Bars (So.)

LT **78 Ronnie Stanley** (Sr.)
70 Hunter Bivin (Jr.)

WR **3 Amir Carlisle** (Gr.)
16 Torii Hunter Jr. (Jr.)

WR **2 Chris Brown** (Sr.)
88 Corey Robinson (Jr.)

H **14 DeShone Kizer** (So.)
4 Montgomery VanGorder (So.)

KR **3 Amir Carlisle** (Gr.)
9 C.J. Sanders (Fr.)

LS **61 Scott Daly** (Sr.)
99 Hunter Smith (Sr.)

PK **19 Justin Yoon** (Fr.)
43 John Chereson (Jr.)

P **85 Tyler Newsome** (So.)
42 Jeff Riney (Fr.)

PR **9 C.J. Sanders** (Fr.)
7 Will Fuller (Jr.)



IRISH PASSING

DeShone Kizer wasn't perfect last week against Georgia Tech, but he was perfectly adequate. One touchdown and interception each, 242 yards and 21 completions on 30 attempts will not win the Irish every game, but it will give them at least a chance to win them. With Kizer under center, Notre Dame's playoff hopes are not dead quite yet.

The Minutemen give up almost 400 yards per game through the air this year. While that has only resulted in two passing scores for their opponents, they allow 7.6 yards per attempt. Kizer should have plenty of time in the pocket to find targets in a relatively small Minuteman secondary.

Meanwhile, Will Fuller is building a case to be considered the best receiver in the country, with five touchdowns and 132.3 yards per game so far. He is also Notre Dame's most dangerous big-play threat, with the seven longest passes of the year all going to him.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH RUSHING

C.J. Prosise broke record last Saturday with his 91-yard touchdown, the longest run in Notre Dame Stadium history. He scored twice more and ended with nearly 200 yards rushing all by himself. Prosise also has the benefit of playing behind one of the most experienced offensive lines the Irish have had in quite some time.

Massachusetts allows nearly 230 yards rushing per game, which has turned into six rushing touchdowns allowed in two games.

The only major area of concern for the Irish is how many carries Prosise will take Saturday. Brian Kelly has said he wants the senior to stay fresh for later opponents, and Notre Dame cannot afford another injury. Freshmen Josh Adams and Dexter Williams back Prosise up but didn't see the field all that much against Georgia Tech. That will change as they develop further, Kelly said, starting as soon as Saturday.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

For some reason, Kelly seems to thrive when working with a rookie quarterback. He tailored the offense to suit Kizer's skillset

last week against Georgia Tech, and he will likely only make some small adjustments this week

It is unlikely Kizer will take on more in his second career start. Kelly has said his fundamentals need improvement, even though he was pleased with his performance overall. A specific area of concern is Kizer's cadence, which Kelly said is slower than Malik Zaire's and resulted in four false start penalties last Saturday.

Kelly helped Kizer against the Yellow Jackets by putting an increased load on C.J. Prosise, who proved himself more than equal to the task. This week, however, the rushing load will likely be split between Prosise, Adams and Williams to keep Prosise fresh.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

Freshman kicker Justin Yoon endured a rough day against Georgia Tech, knocking one extra point off the goalpost and flat out missing another. He did make his only field goal attempt of the game, a 29-yard chip shot, but he lacks consistency.

Sophomore punter Tyler Newsome averaged around 40 yards per punt against the Yellow Jackets and got three touchbacks on kickoffs, but the coverage unit allowed 20-yard returns on those three returns. On punts, Georgia Tech had 34 yards on three returns, including a long of 18.

C.J. Sanders continued to struggle on punt returns, collecting seven yards on two returns, and Amir Carlisle only had one kickoff return for 16 yards.

EDGE: MASSACHUSETTS

IRISH SCHEDULE (3-0)

Sept. 5 **Texas (W 38-3)**
Sept. 12 **@ Virginia (W 34-27)**
Sept. 19 **Georgia Tech (W 30-22)**
Sept. 26 **Massachusetts**
Oct. 3 **@ Clemson**
Oct. 10 **Navy**
Oct. 17 **USC**
Oct. 31 **@ Temple**
Nov. 7 **@ Pittsburgh**
Nov. 14 **Wake Forest**
Nov. 21 **vs. Boston College**
Nov. 28 **@ Stanford**



Alex Carson
Associate Sports Editor



Brian Plamondon
Sports Writer

If there's concern for Notre Dame this week, it's that Massachusetts's biggest strength, throwing the football, correlates with Notre Dame's biggest weakness so far, its secondary. If Minutemen quarterback Blake Frohnapfel can connect with Tajae Sharpe for big gains, they could put up enough points to keep the game a little more interesting than Irish eyes may want it to be.

But even if Frohnapfel plays well, the Irish should dominate the other facets of this game. Success will be determined by whether or not freshman quarterback Brandon Wimbush is able to see the field, and at the end of the day, he will in a comfortable Irish triumph.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 37, Massachusetts 20

As the injuries mount for the Irish, they might soon take a toll on this resilient team. It won't be this week-end against Massachusetts, however. Notre Dame opened as 28.5-point favorites, and it should win by at least that much against an 0-2 Minutemen team.

Don't get me wrong, Mark Whipple's squad showed some fight last week in hanging with a very good Temple team. Still, they are overmatched in every facet against a talented and well-coached Notre Dame team.

I almost think Georgia Tech scoring two late touchdowns last week was good for the Irish, who will sharpen their focus so as to avoid a letdown against an inferior opponent. Look for freshman backup quarterback Brandon Wimbush to undoubtedly see time this week.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 49, Massachusetts 10

For in-game updates and stats from the press box Saturday, follow us on Twitter at @ObserverSports



Irish special teams facing early struggles

By GREG HADLEY
Editor-in-Chief

Through three games, Notre Dame's special teams unit has put itself in the spotlight enough to last all of 2015.

It started with an unsteady hold and near-fumble on a punt against Texas, then continued with a fake field goal and a missed chip shot at Virginia, and most recently manifested itself with an errant extra point and all of seven return yards on seven punts against Georgia Tech.

The No. 6 Irish have a wide range of experience on special teams, with freshmen at kicker and punt returner and seniors at kick returner, long snapper and kickoff coverage.

So far, those players have come together put up middling numbers.

The Irish are 120th in the FBS in kickoff returns and 84th in punt returns. When defending, they rank 82nd in punt coverage and 30th on kickoffs. Freshman kicker Justin Yoon is four for six on field goals, 63rd in the country, and behind 80 other kickers who have yet to miss an extra point.

But as the first month of a season comes to a close, head coach Brian Kelly is still hopeful for what lies ahead.

"No, I'm not concerned," Kelly said when asked about Yoon. "He's still working through some fundamentals. Justin is such a conscientious kid. He'll clean up a couple of the mistakes he made and make the adjustments necessary. Not concerned in the least bit."

Kelly's confidence extends to his kickoff return team, too.

"We were able to make the adjustment that I wanted on kickoff return [against Georgia Tech]," he said. "So yeah, I'll be anxious to see where we go this week with it."

That self-assurance is present in the players as well. Senior receiver Amir Carlisle is averaging just 15.25 yards on his kickoff returns, but the way he sees it, the Irish special teams are headed in the right direction.

"A lot of effort, a lot of passion," Carlisle said when asked to describe the kickoff return team. "There's always room for improvement. ... We got to make some big plays and all be on the same page, and that's been an emphasis going into this week. Just being on the same page."

Carlisle has only returned the ball four times this season, three of which went for fewer than 20 yards. But at some point, he believes he

will break out.

"Yeah definitely," Carlisle said when asked if he thought he could return a kick for a touchdown. "That's my goal: to take one back. I have confidence that I will be able to do that this year. I have confidence in the guys blocking for me and in [special teams coordinator Scott] Booker's scheme."

As a returner, Carlisle has also helped to mentor freshman punt returner C.J. Sanders. Thus far, Sanders has only collected 54 yards on nine returns, but Carlisle said he believes Sanders is also primed for a breakthrough.

"It only takes one," Carlisle said. "It only takes one to

see STRUGGLES PAGE 9



EMMET FARNAN | The Observer

Irish freshman kicker Justin Yoon winds up for a field goal attempt during Notre Dame's 30-22 win over Georgia Tech. Yoon is 4 for 6 on field goals this year but missed an extra point Saturday.

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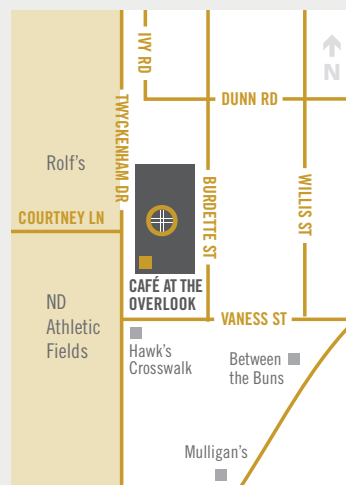
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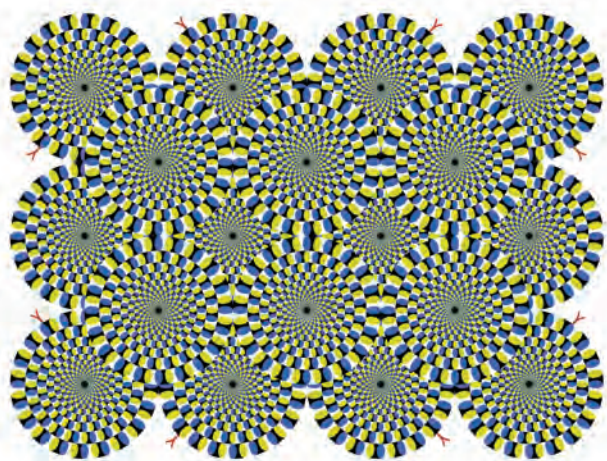
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CAITLYN JORDAN | The Observer

Irish freshman receiver C.J. Sanders sprints upfield after fielding a punt during Notre Dame's 34-27 victory over the Cavaliers on Sept. 12.

Struggles

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

take it back. Sometimes it's not going to be there. ... But all it takes is one hole to break through and change the game and the momentum. As a punt returner, we really believe in C.J. Sanders. We believe he can get the job done.

"C.J.'s a great athlete. I tell him just to be instinctual and to trust your God-given gifts and let that manifest itself on the field."

Carlisle also expressed confidence in Yoon and sophomore Tyler Newsome, who handles punts and kickoffs for the Irish. Even though the two have experienced some rough patches early on in the season — in addition to his missed extra point, Yoon ricocheted another off the goalpost against Georgia Tech, and Newsome ranks 90th in the country in touchback percentage — Carlisle said both have the

full faith of the team.

"It's not too much, 'You gotta do this, you gotta do this,'" Carlisle said. "But's it just 'Good job. You're doing a great job.' We're all really supportive of the specialists."

Carlisle is not the only senior leader on special teams. Graduate student Matthias Farley doesn't see the field often on the defensive side, where he is a cornerback, but he plays frequently on kickoff coverage and return. In that role, he has become a team captain and a mentor to younger players who receive limited playing time with his positive attitude, according to Kelly.

"I don't try to make a role for myself," Farley said. "I just try to control what I can control, which is my attitude and my effort and those things I can change, whether I'm [playing] a hundred snaps a game or none."/end

Contact Greg Hadley at
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CAITLYN JORDAN | The Observer

Irish graduate student receiver Amir Carlisle carries the ball during Notre Dame's 38-7 win over Texas at Notre Dame Stadium on Sept. 5.

Explosive duo highlights Minutemen offense

By **MARY GREEN**

Assistant Managing Editor

Sandwiched between games against then-No. 14 Georgia Tech and current No. 11 Clemson, no one would blame Brian Kelly for taking a week off for this week's game against MAC member Massachusetts to focus on a showdown with the Tigers next weekend.

But that's exactly what the Irish head coach isn't going to do.

"These are the games that concern me the most, where everybody else thinks that they are going to be easy games," Kelly said Tuesday. "This is going to be a difficult game. ... I know what we need to do. We've got to play well against them. So it's not a breather for me, and I don't count anything."

"It would be nice that all those things happen, but I don't go into the game thinking that way. I go into the game that we have got to be prepared for everything."

While the Notre Dame defense put up its best effort of the season in thwarting Georgia Tech's triple-option offense last week, it will have to deal with the best quarterback it has faced so far this season in UMass graduate student Blake Frohnapfel.

Last season for the Minutemen (0-2), Frohnapfel, a graduate-student transfer from Marshall, passed for 3,345 yards in only 10 games, averaging nearly 350 yards per game, alongside 23 touchdowns to bring his passing efficiency to 132.2. He was named the 2014 all-MAC first-team quarterback, a title he is on track to claim for a second straight year in 2015.

Frohnapfel has thrown for 618 yards and two touchdowns through Massachusetts' first two games, losses to Colorado and Temple.

Lining up as Frohnapfel's main target downfield is senior receiver Taje Sharpe, who was named to the preseason Biletnikoff Award

watch list. He joined his quarterback on the all-MAC first team last season after pulling in seven touchdowns and accumulating 1,295 all-purpose yards. Sharpe has racked up 294 receiving yards so far this season, though opposing teams have kept him from finding success in the end zone with no scores.

Kelly said the Irish defense had to make a drastic switch in practice this week between preparing for Georgia Tech's triple-option offense to one that prefers to air it out much more often.

"It will be a big transition for us defensively," he said. "You know, Frohnapfel, Taje Sharpe, two very dangerous players. Blake is a very good quarterback, throws it well, has got escapability. Stands in the pocket. Knows what he's doing. And I think Taje Sharpe, one of the better receivers we'll see all year."

Minutemen head coach Mark Whipple said his offense — which converted just three of its 17 third-down opportunities last week against Temple — will be focused on the essentials this week to try to find a way to crack the strong Irish defense.

"We're trying to find ways to make first downs, and certainly this week will probably be I would think a lot more difficult than last week," Whipple said.

Whipple heads the offensive attack, arriving at Massachusetts after stints with Miami (Fla.), Philadelphia Eagles and Pittsburgh Steelers, where he served as the team's quarterbacks coach and won a Super Bowl with Ben Roethlisberger in 2006.

"They have got a good quarterback, very solid offensive line and some receivers that can create some problems," graduate student linebacker Joe Schmidt said. "And really, they have a coordinator that was in the NFL, and he knows how to challenge a defense with concepts. So there are things that we need to make sure that we're aware of and working



Photo courtesy of Robert Rigo and the Massachusetts Daily Collegian

Massachusetts graduate student quarterback Blake Frohnapfel scans the field during the Minutemen's 25-23 loss to Temple on Saturday. Frohnapfel has thrown for 618 yards and two scores this season.

on and that's kind of what we are spending a lot of time on this week being ready for that and for everything they do."

While Massachusetts typically faces smaller MAC programs in its conference games, the Minutemen are no strangers to settings as large as the one they will face Saturday at Notre Dame Stadium. Last year, they lost 48-7

on the road against Penn State at the expansive Beaver Stadium, which holds more than 107,000 fans at full capacity.

However, Whipple said he won't use the tradition and setting against the nation's No. 6 team to motivate his squad this weekend.

"They don't give trophies, national championships. We're not getting any rings for the game,"

Whipple said. "It's a huge game, and I think we'll be excited, but I thought we'd be excited for Penn State last year, and we weren't, so we've got to get our guys motivated and kind of get the Temple game out, and it certainly would be a big win for us."

Contact Mary Green at
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Photo courtesy of Robert Rigo and the Massachusetts Daily Collegian

Massachusetts head coach Mark Whipple meets with the media following his team's 25-23 loss to Temple on Saturday.

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Fall 2015



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- Dorothy Day

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

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Lower Level, Geddes Hall



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His Beatitude Fouad Twal
Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

Tuesday, September 29
4:30 p.m.
Hesburgh Center Auditorium

The escalation of politically and religiously-based violence across the Middle East brings with it an increasingly dangerous environment for Christians. The rise of ISIS, tensions resulting from a seemingly endless Syrian civil conflict, and continued hardships for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza – among many other factors – all contribute to a precarious existence for Christians living in the region. Addressing these pressing issues, Patriarch Twal makes an urgent appeal for greater commitment to safeguarding the Middle East Christian community from human rights abuses.

This event is part of the 2015-16 Notre Dame Forum on "Faith, Freedom and the Modern World: 50 Years After Vatican II," which is commemorating the 50th anniversary of the publication of pivotal documents of the Second Vatican Council that have particular significance today.

