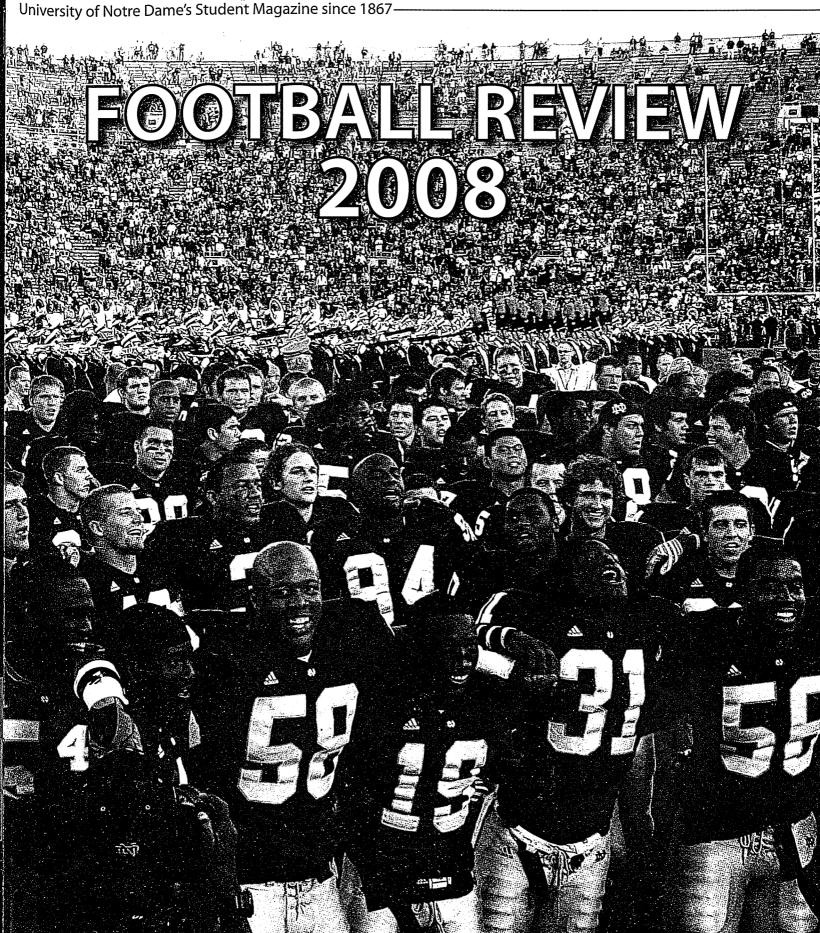
SCHOLASTIC



SPRINGSIMES ROLE MODELSFEB 5-7 INVILICE EBISEIS QUANTUM OF SOLACE FEB 19-2 THE SECOND CITY FEB 20 SUB AT LEGENDS MARCH 28 & APRIL 17 ANTOSTAL WEEK APRIL 20–25

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EDNOTES

7-6.

Could have been 8–5, if we held on to our halftime lead against North Carolina. In fact, could have been 9–4 if we would have done the same two weeks later against Pitt. What's more, it even could have been 10–3 if we didn't essentially give the game away to bottom-feeder Syracuse. We were relatively competitive against Michigan State and Boston College. And USC? Well, they're USC. At least we won't win with "hoodlums and thugs."

The beautiful yet ugly truth about wins and losses is that they neither lie nor deceive. We want to believe that success is complex, and we look for every sign we can to validate losses or de-mythologize wins. But success in athletics (at least, those endeavors not of the "suburban youth" sort) is determined by wins and losses. Playing what-if is fun, but anybody can play what-if. We want the world to weep over our tragic misfortune, yet the world does not stop to ponder what-if; it continues to speed ahead in the grand linear cosmic timeline. There is an unbearable lightness of being in athletics, and this existential crisis is what mesmerizes us. At least until the next season opener.

So as you read back on the 2008 season, feel free to sit back, relax and reflect on what 7–6 could have been. It won't change the past, but it certainly can help us feel better. Consider the questions I raise on pages 4–5. Why can't the Irish seem to get a win, or want a win, when merely coming close is considered a respectable enough achievement? Is this a matter of coaching or something more particular, more psychologically innate in the types of players we recruit? Contemplate what kind of difference next year's crop of blue-chip recruits will make in these types of pivotal games, as our new Sports Editor Matt Formica reports on pages 34–35. And take a step back from the ND Bubble, as Sporting News magazine associate editor and former Scholastic editor Jim Ryan has had the opportunity to do, and think about what this season meant not only for fans, but to both our critics and the national media (or are they one and the same?).

Though there are no do-overs in life, athletics, unlike our own temporality, provide an opportunity for re-generation and re-incarnation. 2009, here we come.

MAT

Marques Camp Associate Editor

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SCHOLASTIC Football Review 2008 A Tale of Two Games San Diego State Michigan 8 Michigan State 10 Purdue 12 Stanford 14 North Carolina 16 Washington 18 Pittsburgh 20 вС 22 Navy Syracuse USC 24 26 28 Hawai'i Bowl 30 Statistics 32 Stars in the Making 34 Final Word 36

ATALE OF TWO GAMES and the Future of the lish

Marques Camp

On Nov. 1, 2008, the Notre Dame Fighting Irish opened up a 17–3 halftime lead against the Pittsburgh Panthers. The Panthers proceeded to hold the Irish to 107 total yards and 7 points over the final two quarters, while scoring 21 points of their own to force overtime. On the fourth overtime drive, Pittsburgh senior kicker Conor Lee kicked his career-high fifth field goal to defeat the Irish 36–33. The Panthers exuberantly celebrated their hard-fought victory in the big game that made them bowl eligible for the first time in five years, while the Irish dejectedly walked off their home field, their once-promising record falling to 5–3.

We all love big games, if only because they possess an intangible quality that other regular season games lack. Big games count the same as regular games — a win is a win, a loss is a loss — but symbolically, they represent so much more. Big games turn seasons around. Big games catapult winners to greater heights. Big games are proving grounds. In some cases, big games define legacies. The early November matchup against Pittsburgh, was, for all intents and

purposes, a big game for the Irish, and they failed to pull out a victory. Again.

This sense of big game failure may forever define the legacy of Head Coach Charlie Weis.

On Nov. 1, 2008, the No. 6 Texas Tech Red Raiders opened up a 22-6 halftime lead against the top-ranked Texas Longhorns. In the second half, the Longhorns rallied from a 29-13 deficit to take a 33-32 lead with one and a half minutes left in the fourth quarter. On the Texas Tech sideline, some Red Raiders may have privately feared that their quest for the once-in-a-generation upset of Goliath was finished. This big game, however, was far from over. Heisman hopeful (and eventual Heisman snub) senior quarterback Graham Harrell fought back with a 6-play, 62-yard drive after the ensuing kickoff, and the Red Raiders took a 39-33 lead with an incredibly acrobatic, tiptoeing catch by star sophomore receiver Michael Crabtree, in

perhaps one of the most exciting finishes in college football history. The stirring display of receiving ingenuity was sufficient for the upset victory of the Longhorns and helped catapult the Red Raiders to a No. 2 ranking in the Associated Press Poll.

Perhaps it is a bit harsh to entirely pin the blame for the 2008 Irish Mediocrity Tour on Charlie Weis. As is the case with head coaches in all college athletic programs, however, his is the face that represents the football program, and his is the mission that recruits, players and fans buy into.

Perhaps it is a bit harsh to pin the moniker, "2008 Irish Mediocrity Tour," on a team that seemed to exhibit considerable improvement in many areas from the abject failure of the 2007 3–9 campaign. But the mission, as was so briskly and incisively printed on tens of thousands of green towels in 2006, was "9–3 is Not Good Enough." If that is the case, then 7–6 should make us just downright angry.

The Notre Dame Fighting Irish have just completed their fourth year under the reign of King Wise I. In that span, they have played, roughly speaking, 10 or so big games, and it seems fair to say that they have not won many of them, if any at all. The annual date with Michigan is usually a big game. USC, as long as Pete Carroll roams the sidelines, will always be a big game. Matchups against Boston College are usually big games. Pittsburgh, though unranked, was a big game, if only because it provided a litmus test for the direction of the Irish.

Weis' then-brief legacy was defined, in part, by a big game in 2005. 34-31. Underdogs against vaunted No.1 USC? Remember that game? Many were singing his praises at the time, in a game his team lost. Never before has a moral victory earned so much money.

To some, 2008 was a tale of two seasons. A 4-1 start provided optimism for those who didn't know what to expect from the Irish. A 23-7 loss to Michigan State, while disappointing, was somewhat expected. The Irish had shown that, unlike in 2007, they could at least compete with quality opponents. The blown lead against No. 22 North Carolina, however, and the inability to clinch bowl eligibility against Pittsburgh proved to be devastating hits to the early season optimism. But to some, these losses, while tough to swallow, further proved that the Irish could compete and expect to win against quality opponents - a nice change of scenery from that season we shall no longer speak of.

But since when did moral victories count in the standings?

Nobody would have blamed the Texas Tech Red Raiders if Crabtree had not taken his talents to superhuman levels on the game-winning drive. A 33-32 loss to No.1 Texas, while oh-so-heart-wrenching and devastating, would not have been so bad. The game, irrespective of Crabtree's amazing catch, proved Texas Tech could compete and expect to win against the most feared squads in the land. No more were the Red Raiders an offensive novelty, a team that racked up aesthetically pleasing numbers but remained unable to replicate these numbers in big games when it really mattered. Perhaps a close loss this year would have given them confidence to pull out a win next year. Nonetheless, 33-32 was not good enough. Wait til next year was not good enough. This was a big game. The necessity for tangible victory was immanent. And the Texas Tech Red Raiders pulled out the victory in a game they really didn't have to win to prove their ability.

Nov. 1, 2008 was a tale of two games. Charlie Weis' Irish are on the wrong side of the contrast.

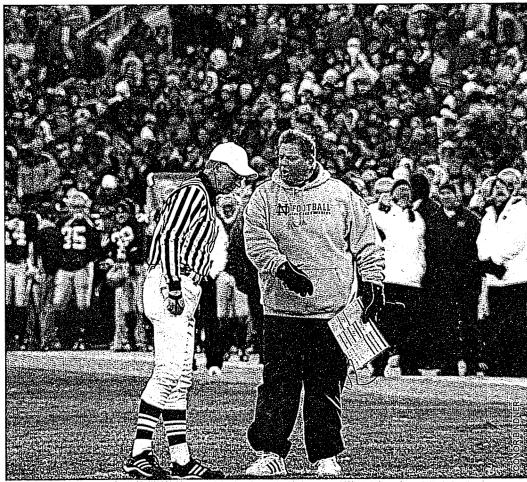
To many, Weis' brilliant recruiting acumen has given hope to those seeking the nebulous "Return to Glory" that we speak of. They say it is only a matter of time before Weis puts it all together — talent, scheming, motivation, experience — and turns the Irish into the national championship contenders we all expect them to be. Sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen, at times, was brilliant. Receivers sophomore Golden Tate and freshman Michael Floyd demanded their inclusion in the national conversation. The defense, under the tutelage of Corwin Brown and Jon Tenuta, became more tenacious and aggressive.

But the offensive line still struggled with run blocking, and as such the running game was nowhere to be seen, as the general theme in Weis' tenure has been. Losses used to be a matter of not even competing in big games, and this season they became a matter of not being able to pull out close wins in big games. Where is the motivation? Where are the biggame heroics? Where are the plays that we're not supposed to make but we make anyway? Is merely expecting to win good enough?

Perhaps nobody blames the Irish for not competing for a BCS berth this year. We still have a ways to go in many fundamental areas for this to happen. North Carolina and Pittsburgh were starting points. They show us that, when we utilize our talent and execute properly, we can at least compete and expect to win against quality opponents. Perhaps that may be significant improvement and hope that we can take from this past season.

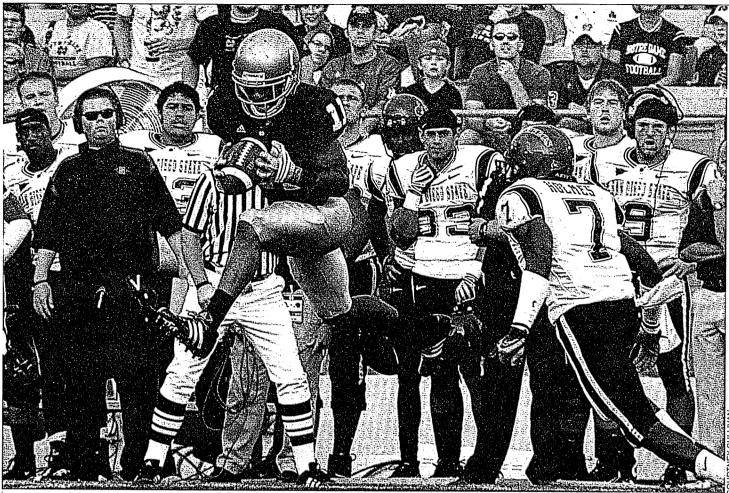
But since when did moral victories count in the standings?

The views of this author are not necessarily the views of Scholastic magazine.



BIG GAME BLUES Charlie Weis' Irish have repeatedly come up short in big games. Is a defining win coming their way next season?

SAN DIEGO STATE



SENIORITY RULES Senior wide receiver and co-captain David Grimes played a key role in the season opener, catching a late touchdown pass to secure the game for the Irish.

A Shaky Opener

NOTRE DAME 21, SAN DIEGO STATE 13

Notre Dame Stadium

September 6, 2008 Attendance: 80,795 All-Time Series: 1-0-0

1 2 SDSU 0 7 ND 0 7	6 0	END 13 1 21
Key Stats Total Yards Rushing Yards	SDSU 345 71	ND 342 105

Maddy Zollo

s the Fighting Irish set foot on their home field to face the San Diego State Aztecs on Sept. 6, the players and coaches alike shared a common goal - to show that they were not the same team as they were in 2007. With the a dismal 3-9 record the previous season, a victory in the opening game was a crucial first step for Notre Dame to regain its reputation as a school with a top football program. The Irish fans also knew the importance of a win, and as the crowd watched its team prepare for kickoff in the Notre Dame stadium, they couldn't help but worry that this season would be a repeat of the last — one that was overshadowed by disappointing performances from one weekend to the next.

The Aztecs entered the game as the 21-

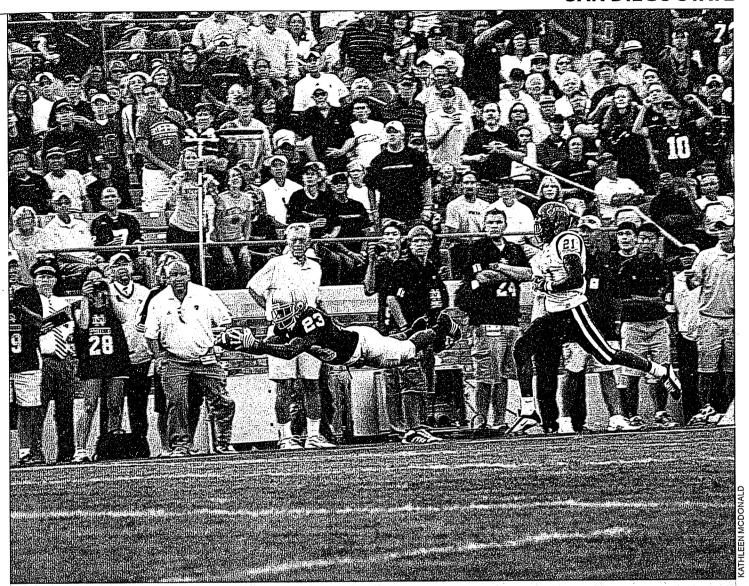
point underdog and with a loss already under their belt. Nonetheless, San Diego State was the first to score with a touchdown run by freshman quarterback Ryan Lindley with 5:32 left in the second quarter. Their lead motivated the Irish to retaliate, and sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen threw a 22-yard touchdown pass to freshman wide receiver Michael Floyd, tying up the game right before halftime.

The Aztecs once again took the lead with a 15-yard touchdown pass in the third quarter but failed to convert the point-after attempt. With the scoreboard reading 13-7 and the Irish offense failing to score for the remainder of the quarter, Notre Dame fans began to fear that this game was the start of another losing season.

11-100

Turnovers

Penalties-Yards



GOLDEN IS THY TATE Sophomore speedster Golden Tate continued his fast ascent, catching six passes for 93 yards and a touchdown.

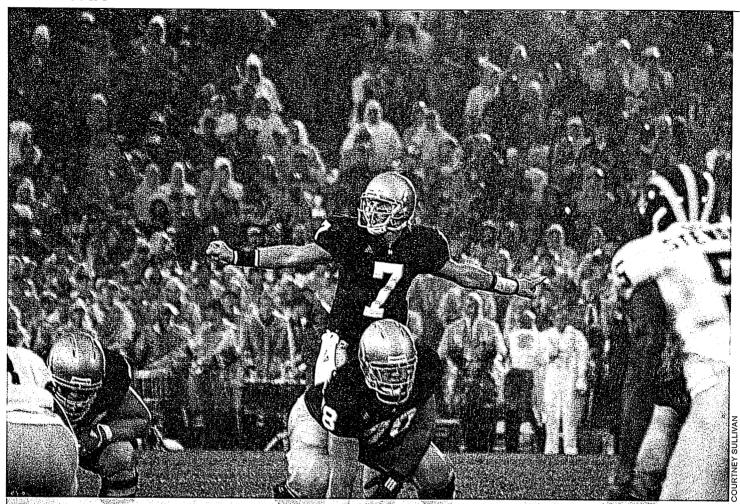
Early in the fourth quarter, sophomore Aztec running back Brandon Sullivan nearly scored another touchdown, but senior Irish safety David Bruton knocked the ball loose and recovered it in the end zone for a touchback, preventing San Diego from taking a two-touchdown lead. Soon after, Clausen threw a 38-yard pass to sophomore wide receiver Golden Tate. The Irish secured the win in the last two minutes with a 6-yard touchdown reception by senior wide receiver David Grimes.

Leaving the game victorious with a final score of 21-13, the Irish knew that there was still a lot of work to be done. With four turnovers and a handful of defensive errors, the team didn't look as though it had totally fixed many of the problems that had plagued it in the past. But as the Irish players lined up in front of the student section to sing the Notre Dame Alma Mater with their peers, there seemed to be an overwhelming sense of hope for what the rest of the season would hold.

FROM THE

PRESS BOX

When first hearing whom the Fighting Irish would play against in their season opener, many people wondered, "Why San Diego State?" and with good reason. Notre Dame Stadium held the sixth largest crowd the Aztecs had ever played for in the program's history. The 80,795 people in attendance paled only to games the Aztecs had played against powerhouse football schools such as Michigan and Ohio State. The Aztecs failed to win in any of the games in front of these large crowds, and their loss to the Irish continued this trend.



WET 'N WILD No amount of rain could put out Notre Dame's fire against the Wolverines with sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen calling the plays.

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Notre Dame Stadium			Notr	F D	AMF.	3.5	Mici	HIGA

Claire Kenney

Notre Dame Stadium								
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ND	21	7	0	7	35			
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Total Ya	ards		388		260			
Rushin	g Yards		159	159				
Turnov	ers		6		2			
Penalty	/ Yards		79		38			

ometimes all one needs for motivation is a little inspiration. This was the sentiment shared by many Irish players regarding ex-coach Lou Holtz's motivational speech during the Sept. 12 pep rally prior to the game against Michigan. The following day, the Irish had the opportunity to prove themselves to both the Wolverines and to their critics.

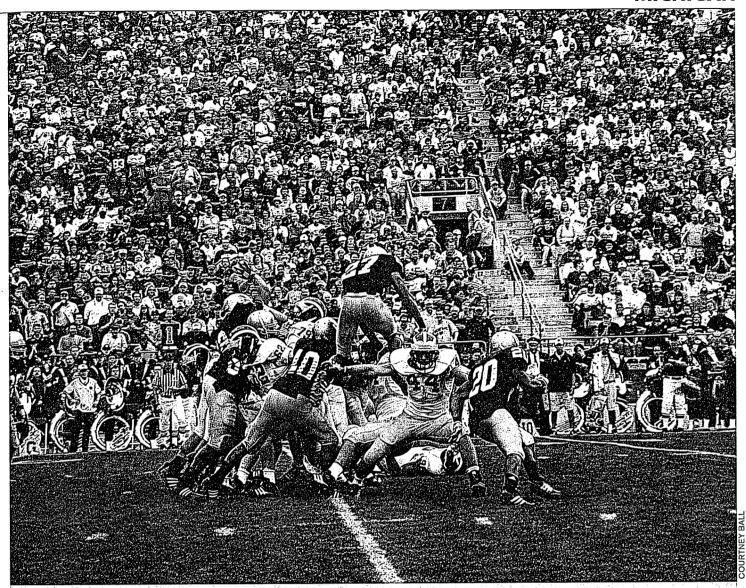
Notre Dame's quest for redemption from the disappointing 38-0 defeat at the hands of the Wolverines the previous season was apparent in the first few minutes of the game, as the Irish recovered a Michigan fumble, the first of six in the game for the Wolverines, on the opening drive. Sophomore running back Robert Hughes finished off the Irish's brief 3play, 11-yard drive with a 2-yard run to stake

the Irish to a 7-0 lead.

Following another Michigan fumble recovery on the ensuing kickoff, sophomore wide receiver Duval Kamara hauled in a 10-yard pass from sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen to increase the lead to 14-0 for the Irish.

Clausen launched a 48-yard touchdown pass to sophomore wide receiver Golden Tate near the end of the first quarter, increasing the lead to 21-0. With about two minutes left in the quarter, however, Michigan sophomore quarterback Steven Threet threw a 40-yard touchdown pass to freshman running back. Sam McGuffie to cut into the Irish lead.

In the second quarter, following a Michigan field goal, Hughes added yet another touchdown, this time with a 1-yard scamper.



PILEUP Senior safety David Bruton waits for no man and climbs to new heights.

Michigan managed a second touchdown midway through the quarter, pushing the lead to 28-17, where it remained at halftime.

During the third quarter, the pelting rain that began seemed to influence play. Numerous turnovers and fumbles, perhaps due to the slick weather, marked the sloppy third quarter play by both teams.

In the fourth quarter, however, the Irish used the weather to their advantage. Sophomore linebacker Brian Smith's 35-yard fumble recovery with seconds into the quarter extended the Irish lead to 35–17, and the Irish held on for the victory. "It was very fun, knowing that we were up. It's fun going out in those conditions," Hughes said after the game. "When it's rainy and muddy like this

you've got to protect the ball and we did."

Charlie Weis and his team certainly had reason to celebrate in their redemptive victory over Michigan and its 2–0 record. He didn't attribute the win to Holtz' speech nor to any motivational tactics, but to ND's hunger for respect. "Today it was not Lou, it was not the '88 team, it was those guys in that locker room stepping up and earn[ing] the respect that [senior linebacker] Mo Crum was talking about last night at the pep rally," Weis said following the victory. "We had a bunch of guys that stepped up and said we want to make a statement that Notre Dame's not just some garbage school out there."

FROM THE

PRESS BOX

The Sept. 13 Michigan game proved that wipeouts are not only for California surfers, but for South Bend football coaches as well. While going about his job on the sideline, Charlie Weis tore his left ACL and MCL after a Wolverine pushed Irish junior linebacker John Ryan into his coach during a Notre Dame punt. During the post game press conference, Weis said about the injury, "I feel like an athlete. First time in my life!"

MICHIGAN STATE

Spartan Stadiu	m		
September 20, 2	800		
Attendance: 76,	366		
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MSU 3 7	3	10 23	
			The state of the s
Key Stats	ND	MSU	
Total Yards	258	346	The state of the s
Rushing Yards	16	203	
Turnovers	3	0	
1st Downs	18	. 16	UP, UP AND AWAY Standout freshman wide receiver Michael Floyd finished the game with seven receptions for 86 yards.

Lacing Up in East Lansing

MICHIGAN STATE 23, NOTRE DAME 7

Tommy Krcmaric

he Fighting Irish marched into East Lansing with a 2–0 record and plenty of confidence following the previous week's dismantling of rival Michigan. An Irish win over Michigan State would have given Notre Dame its first 3–0 start since 2002, which could have catapulted the team into ranked territory for the first time in over 18 months. The Irish had history on their side: The road team won the previous seven games in the series. Standing in Notre Dame's way, however, was senior Spartan running back Javon Ringer, one of the nation's leading rushers with 498 yards and nine touchdowns in his first three games.

The contest began slowly, with Michigan State leading 3–0 after the first quarter. The Spartan defense bottled up the Irish offense early. The only Notre Dame scoring threat in the first quarter ended when sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen threw an interception in the end zone. The Irish defense also played well, not allowing any big plays from Ringer in the first half as the Spartans continued to feed the ball to their star player.

The first big play of the game came midway through the second quarter, when Clausen's

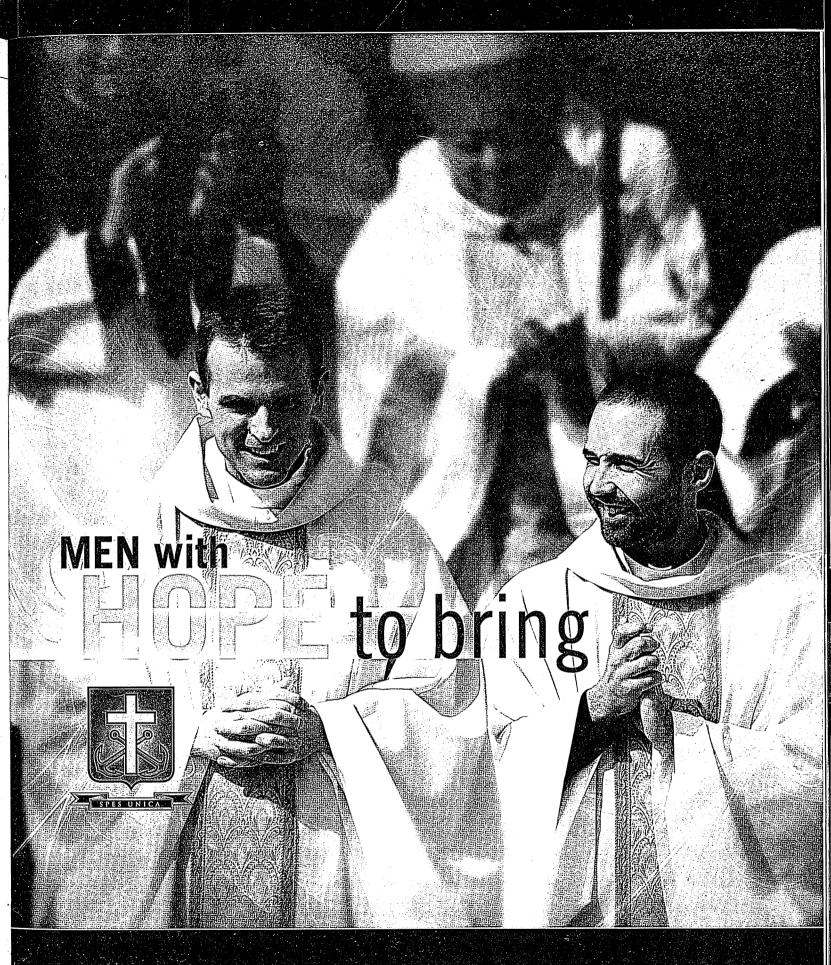
pass was intercepted at Notre Dame's 22-yard line. A few minutes later, Ringer plunged into the end zone from one yard out, giving the Spartans a 10–0 lead. The Irish offense got the ball back, hoping to cut into the lead before halftime, but was again stymied by the Michigan State defense.

The second half became a tale of two vastly different running games. After surpassing 100 rushing yards in each of the season's first two games, Notre Dame running backs sophomore Armando Allen, junior James Aldridge and sophomore Robert Hughes combined for only 30 yards on 15 carries in the game. The Irish offensive line also gave up three sacks after allowing none in the first two games. Michigan State, meanwhile, continued to pound the ball to Ringer, and by the game's end he had racked up 201 yards on 39 carries.

Unable to run the ball with any amount of success, the Irish turned to an aerial attack in the second half. The offense came alive as Clausen connected several times with highly-touted freshman wide receiver Michael Floyd. The Irish looked poised to score in the third quarter after driving 51 yards to the Michigan State 20-yard line. A

fumble cut the drive short, however, and the Spartans maintained their lead.

On the first play of the fourth quarter, Clausen found Floyd open for a 26-yard touchdown that ended a 75-yard drive and cut the Spartan lead to 13-7. The Spartans responded with a 54-yard drive, capped by junior kicker Brett Swenson's third field goal of the game to make the score 17-6 with nine minutes remaining. After a missed Notre Dame field goal, the Spartans got the ball back. Notre Dame's defense, worn out from chasing Ringer, was susceptible to giving up a big play. With about five minutes to play, Ringer broke free for a 63-yard gain and finished off the drive with another 1-yard touchdown run. The Irish were unable to provide another threat, and the game ended 23-7 in favor of the Spartans.



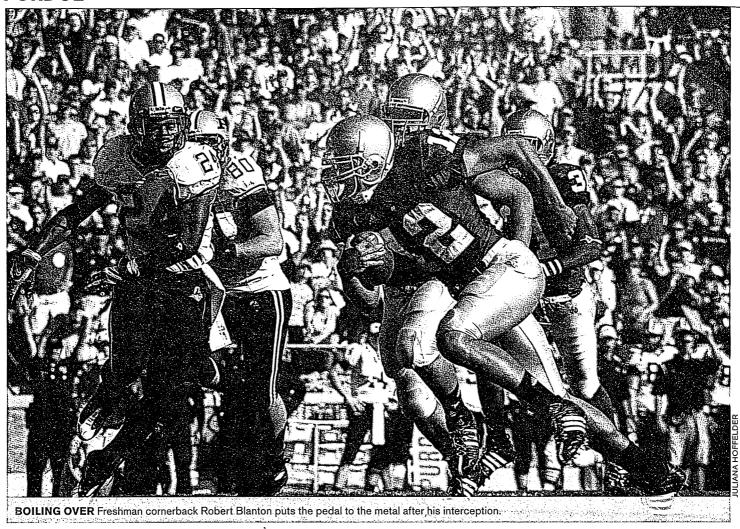


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Is God calling you to join us?

PURDUE



Full Steam Ahead

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Notre Dame 38, Purdue 21

Lisa Bucior

he Irish returned home from Michigan State with a 2-1 record to face their in-state rival, who also came in at 2-1. It was the eightieth time Notre Dame and Purdue faced each other, dating back to 1896 and making it Notre Dame's second most-played series. (Notre Dame vs. Navy is the longest.) The Irish led the series 51-26-2 going into the game but lost to the Boilermakers 33-19 in 2007.

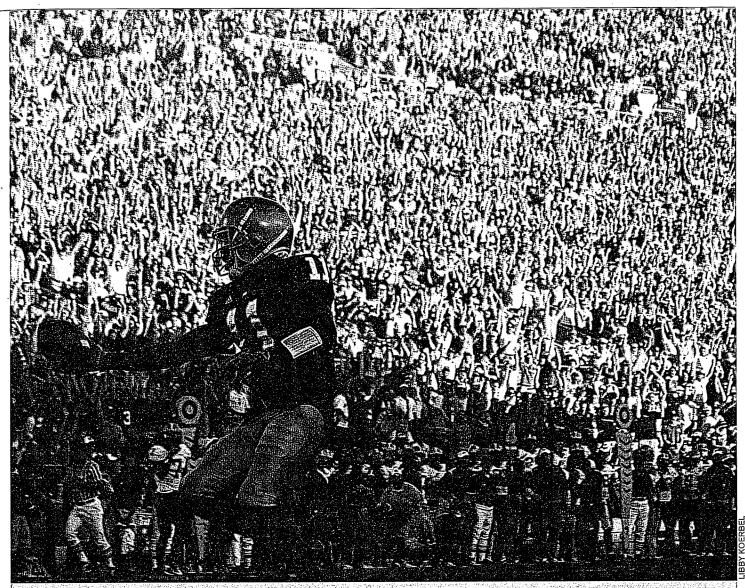
Notre Dame played its best third quarter of the season, beating Purdue and erasing the memory of its first season loss.

Purdue first drew blood when senior $running\,back\,Kory\,Sheets\,scored\,a\,touchdown$ in the first quarter. The Boilermakers were on their way to scoring again in the second quarter when freshman cornerback Robert Blanton intercepted a pass and returned it 47 yards for an Irish touchdown with 9:56 remaining in the quarter.

"It was huge," junior outside linebacker John Ryan said in a post-game press conference. "At the time, we were down, and they almost made it a two-score game. Blanton's interception put us right back into the ball game."

Purdue scored once more to again take the lead, but sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen tied the game at 14 just two minutes before halftime with a 6-yard touchdown pass to sophomore wide receiver Golden Tate.

Despite the tie at halftime, fans were starting to worry. History showed the winner of the Notre Dame-Purdue series usually needed at least 23 points to win, and



CAN'T TOUCH THIS Senior receiver David Grimes dances into the end zone, leaving the Boilermakers in the dust.

the Irish had yet to score in the third quarter this season. The fans, however, had nothing to fear.

The Irish scored a touchdown on their first drive in the third quarter with a 16-yard touchdown run by sophomore running back Armando Allen.

Clausen added two additional touchdowns during the third quarter, throwing a 5-yard strike to freshman tight end Kyle Rudolph and a 30-yard touchdown pass to senior receiver David Grimes.

Meanwhile, the Notre Dame defense held Purdue to just seven points during the second half. The Irish held on to win 38-21.

"We just turned into a different team," Tate said following the game. "We felt we could throw the ball at any time and run the ball at any time. We just went out there and did it."

Irish Head Coach Charlie Weis said in a post-game interview: "The response they had in the third quarter was probably the most significant part of this football game."

Clausen threw for a career-high 275 yards, topping his previous personal best of 246 yards against Air Force in 2007.

Allen also set a career high by rushing for 134 yards, surpassing his previous record of 91 yards against Navy.

Players said they did not let their previous loss distract them from the current game.

"We came out this week more focused," Ryan said. "We left [the loss] at Michigan State. We came out and got ready for Purdue. It's good to get back on track."

FROM THE.

PRESS BOX

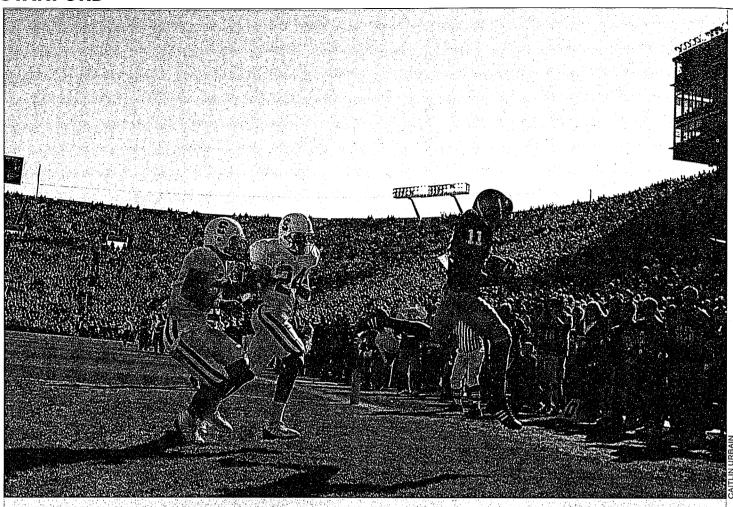
When sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen took the field, fans noticed a major difference in his appearance: His long, golden locks had been shorn.

Clausen cut his hair after the previous week's loss to MSU.

"I've been growing it out for a long time," Clausen said. "I said if we lost, once we lost, I'd cut it off."

To this point, all the buzz had been about senior defensive end Pat Kuntz's mohawk.

"Jimmy's haircut, it still ain't nice," Kuntz told the Chicago Tribune. "He can't have a nice haircut, with that head he's got."



JUMPING FOR JOY Senior wide receiver David Grimes returns to earth with a touchdown catch.

Stomping Stanford

Notre Dame Stadium								
Octobe	er 4, 2	800						
Attendance: 80,795								
All-Tim	e Ser	ies: 17	7–6–0	ָ כ				
	. 1	2	3	4	END			
STAN	0	7	0	14	21			
ND	7	14	7	0	28			
Voy Sta			STA	NI.	ND			
Key Sta					ND			
Total Ya		343		430				
Pass Yai	rds	182		347				
Turnove	ers		4		0			
Sacks			1		5			

Notre Dame 28, Stanford 21

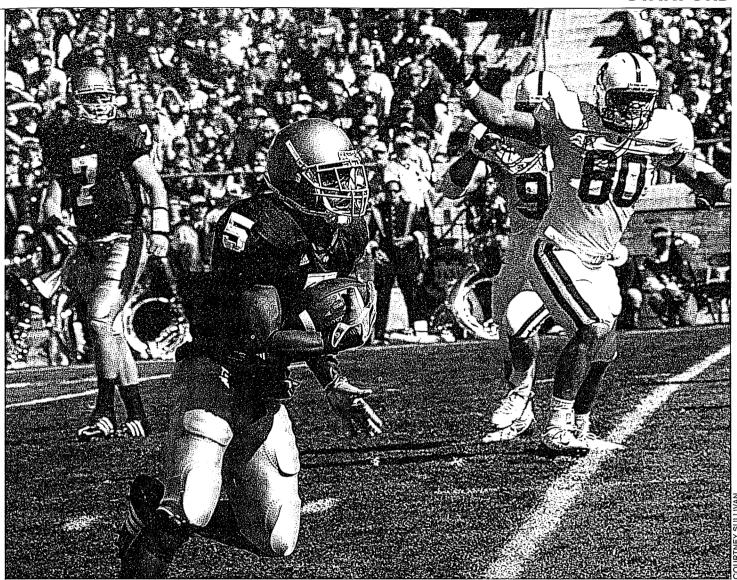
Maria Sellers

oming into the Oct. 4 game against Stanford fresh off a win against Purdue the previous week and a fifteen-year home winning streak against the Cardinal, the Irish were a confident bunch. Emotions ran even higher when Stanford senior tackle Chris Marinelli spoke unkind words about Notre Dame prior to the matchup to Stanford blog cardinalreport.com: "I hate it - playing up there. The field, excuse my language, the field sucks. The stadium sucks. I think the area sucks. I grew up with a bunch of Irish and Italian Catholic people back home, and all the Irish Catholic people, all they talk about is Notre Dame this, Notre Dame that. And they've never even been there, you know. So I hate those guys, I hate that school. We are going out there to mash them up, and that's all there is to it."

The beginning of the game began in favor of the Irish. After an unsuccessful opening drive by Stanford ended in an interception by Irish senior safety David Bruton, sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen successfully found sophomore running back Armando Allen, freshman tight end Kyle Rudolph and sophomore running back Robert Hughes, ending the drive with a 21-yard touchdown pass to Allen for an early 7-0 lead.

Stanford's drive was broken up by senior defensive end Pat Kuntz's interception at the Notre Dame 32-yard line. The Irish failed to make use of their possession, however, giving the Cardinal the chance to tie it up with a 1-yard rush by Stanford's Gerhart at the beginning of the second quarter.

Notre Dame began to pull away with Allen's 3-yard touchdown run to bring the



WELL-HEELED Sophomore running back Armando Allen nimbly skirts a Cardinal defender.

Irish lead to 14-7. Later, Clausen's crowdpleasing 48-yard touchdown pass to freshman receiver Michael Floyd expanded the Irish's lead to 21-7. Late in the second quarter, senior safety Kyle McCarthy intercepted a Stanford pass, but the Irish could not convert the turnover into points.

During the third quarter, the Irish continued to control the Cardinal. With about five minutes left in the quarter, Clausen found Rudolph for a 16-yard touchdown.

The fourth quarter was a different story. An incomplete pass by Clausen segued into a missed 46-yard field goal by Walker. Stanford then drove 72 yards down the field, capped off with a 1-yard touchdown pass to junior tight end Jim Dray from senior quarterback Tavita Pritchard. The Irish were able to hold off Stanford's comeback attempt, however,

and held on for the 28-21 victory. The clock ran out on Stanford after a series of laterals ended in a fumble and recovery by Kuntz.

With the victory, the Irish improved their record to 4-1. Senior defensive end Pat Kuntz said, "It's not a bad start at all ... We've played some good games, and we're a team that's improving. We are just going to keep getting better."

FROM THE PRESS BOX

Despite struggling through 2007 with a 3–9 record and a growing chrous of critics starting to compare the overall records of Charlie Weis with previous coach Tyrone Willingham, the Irish continued an impressive trend in their 28-21 victory over Stanford. The win gave Weis' Irish a 17-3 overall record in games played the week following an Irish victory, for an impressive four-year winning percentage of .850.

NORTH CAROLINA

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On Carolina's Heels

NORTH CAROLINA 29, NOTRE DAME 24

Paige Becker

he Irish anxiously entered Tar Heel territory on Oct. 11 knowing the stakes were high. Notre Dame arrived in Chapel Hill with a 4–1 record, and a win against No. 22 North Carolina could have meant a place in the top-25 rankings.

It looked like luck was on the side of the Irish as they led for the entire first half. Sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen passed for 383 of 472 total yards, outdueling North Carolina junior quarterback Cameron Sexton's 201 passing yards.

Five turnovers, however, including a disputed fumble during ND's last play, ultimately resulted in a disappointing loss. This was the second Irish loss to North Carolina in 18 meetings. The last loss occurred in 1960.

Clausen passed for a touchdown to sophomore wide receiver Golden Tate in the first quarter and another to freshman wide receiver Michael Floyd near the end of the first half.

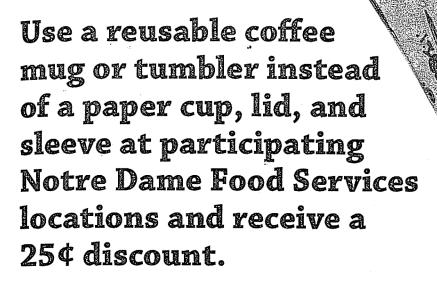
The two first-half touchdowns, in addition to a 42-yard field goal by sophomore kicker Brandon Walker early in the second quarter, gave the Irish a 17-9 halftime lead. The lead was diminished

shortly after as Clausen's first pass attempt in the second half was interceped by Tar Heels' sophomore linebacker Quan Sturdivant, who ran the ball back 32 yards for a touchdown, narrowing the margin to 17–16. This interception not only cost Notre Dame its 8-point lead, but it also ended Clausen's streak of 132 passes with no interceptions. Brady Quinn is the only quarterback in Notre Dame school history with a longer streak—one of 226 passes that ended in 2006.

The second half quickly went downhill for Notre Dame. Despite a third touchdown by Notre Dame's junior running back James Aldridge near the beginning of the third quarter, the Irish were out of luck for the remainder of the game. North Carolina stripped Clausen and recovered the fumble, and Sexton ran the ball for a touchdown at the beginning of the fourth, which brought the score to 29-24 with the Tar Heels now leading. The last of the Irish turnovers happened in the tense final seconds of the game, after Clausen threw a pass to Floyd at UNC's 7-yard line. Though a line judge originally ruled Floyd down

before he lost the ball in what Weis said was a failed lateral, the ruling was changed to a fumble, putting the ball in North Carolina's possession for the final three seconds, in which Sexton took a knee to win the game.

Though some serious mistakes resulted in a loss and a lost chance at ranking, the Irish had several moments of which to be proud. Irish Head Coach Charlie Weis said in a post-game press conference. "I'd like to sit here and say, 'Hey, Jimmy threw for almost 400 [yards], and there were a bunch of good plays out there.' But at the end of the day, the key thing is we didn't take care of the football."



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NOTRE DAME FOOD SERVICES

WASHINGTON

Husky Stadium				
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1st Downs	25		9	
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Tides Turn Against Ty

Notre Dame 33, Washington 7

Michael Doyle

n October 25, 2002, Tyrone Willingham was living the high life. His Fighting Irish were 7-0, gearing up for a game against the Florida State Seminoles. The team was ranked highly week after week. Irish fans were high on Willingham, and it appeared that Notre Dame football was finally back on top.

On October 25, 2008, Tyrone Willingham's career was in trouble. His Washington Huskies were winless through the first six games of the season, and Charlie Weis' 4-2 Fighting Irish were coming to Seattle. As the game approached, it was unclear whether Willingham would retain his job long enough to coach against his former team. How things change in just six short years.

Coming off a bye week that followed a heartbreaking loss at North Carolina, the Irish team that showed up at Husky Stadium looked rejuvenated. The offense, which had lagged in the second half at UNC, took only three plays to get on the board as sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen connected with freshman

wide receiver Michael Floyd for a 51yard touchdown. The Irish struck again in the first quarter as sophomore wide receiver Golden Tate scored on a 21yard end-around run. "I feel like we could have scored more, but we never want to embarrass a team," Tate said of the hapless Huskies in a post-game press conference. "I think we let up once we had them 14-0." When the damage was finally done, the Fighting Irish found themselves on top by a 33-7 margin.

Clausen started slow, as 10 of his first 16 attempts fell incomplete, but he completed eight of his last 10 to finish the night 14-26. "I got out of rhythm in the second quarter," Clausen said after the game. Clausen ended the night with 201 yards passing and one touchdown. Junior running back James Aldridge had his best game of the season to this point, rushing 13 times for 84 yards and two touchdowns.

The Irish defense was impressive as well, holding the Huskies scoreless until about three minutes remained in the game. The Huskies posted only 124 yards of total offense in the contest.

Although sophomore quarterback Jake Locker was notable to play for the Huskies due to a broken thumb, Willingham did not use that as an excuse. "That was almost unbelievable that we would be in that position," Willingham said in the post-game conference in reference to his Huskies' five passing yards and 17-point deficit at halftime. "There was nothing that we did well tonight."

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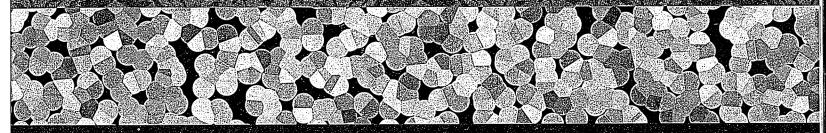
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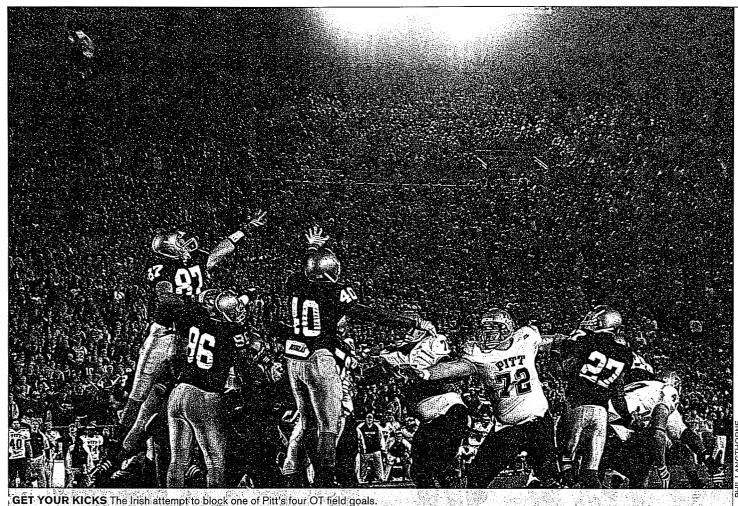
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A Long Loss at ND

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PITTSBURGH 36, NOTRE DAME 33

Mary Kaminski

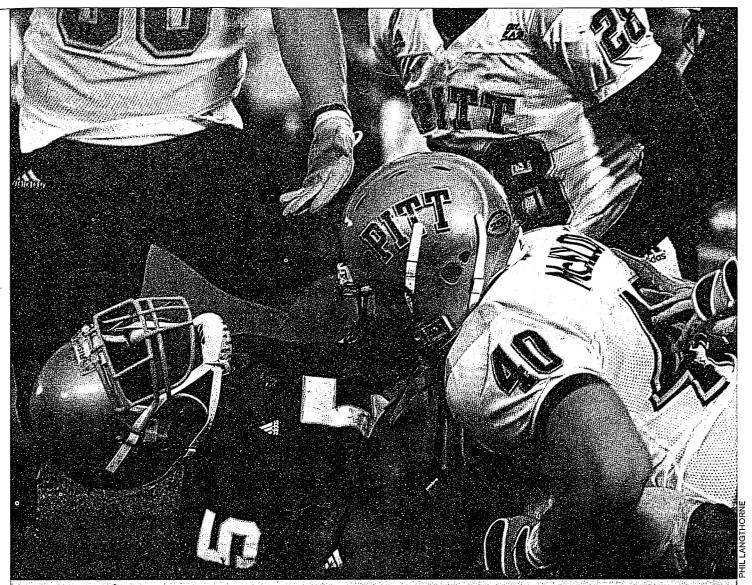
he Irish came into the stadium on Nov. 1 with a five-game winning streak at home but left with an overtime loss to unranked Pittsburgh. It was the Irish's second loss to Pittsburgh in its past three meetings, dropping the team to 5-3 for the season. Notre Dame's first-ever quadrupleovertime game was also the longest game in Notre Dame Stadium history, lasting just over four hours.

The kickers played an integral role in the scoring summary of the game — both teams initially got on the board with field goals, and overtime would later be commanded by field goals as well. The Irish began the game quickly with three points from 39 yards by sophomore kicker Brandon Walker in their first possession. Senior Pittsburgh kicker

Conor Lee answered later in the first quarter to tie the score at 3-3.

Irish and Panther defenses kept the second quarter scoreless until freshman wide receiver Michael Floyd scored on two touchdown passes from sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen at 1:27 and :04 left in the half, pushing the Irish ahead 17-3. The 18- and 4-yard receptions were two of Floyd's 10 receptions for 100 yards for the game. Sophomore wide receiver Golden Tate also had over 100 yards for the day, making Floyd and Tate the first pair of Irish players to do so since Jeff Samardzija and John Carlson at Michigan State in 2006.

Unphased by the late first-half Irish surge, the Panthers scored on their opening drive of the third quarter with a 4-yard run by senior



GROUNDED Sophomore running back Armando Allen nearly loses his helmet as he is brought to the ground.

running back LaRod Stephens-Howling. With an early fourth-quarter touchdown by sophomore running back LeSean McCoy, the Panthers tied the Irish at 17–17. Two final touchdowns by Tate and freshman Panther wide receiver Jonathan Baldwin tied the game 24–24 at the end of regulation.

Overtime proved to be a battle of kickers, as neither team could score a touchdown in the four overtime periods. Lee outlasted Walker, however, in the fourth overtime with a 22-yard field goal to end the game. Walker missed his 38-yard attempt during the Irish possession.

The Irish were disappointed with the loss and their inability to come up with a touchdown during overtime. "To sum it up, we get in overtime, you don't score

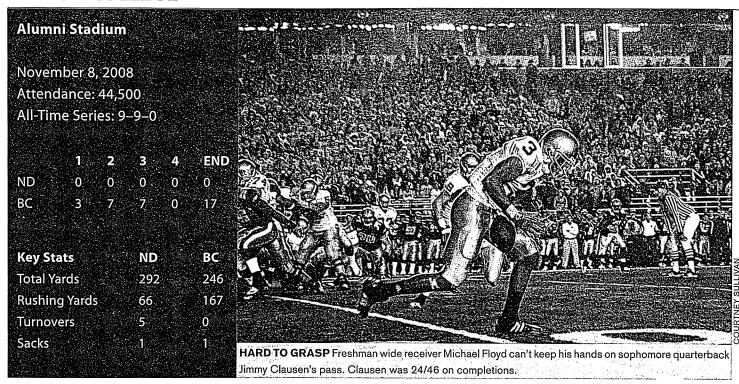
touchdown, you know sooner or later something bad can happen," Notre Dame head coach Charlie Weis said in a post-game press conference.

The Irish looked to put the loss behind them and learn from their mistakes in practice the next week. "Once Monday comes around, it's my job as a leader, and really everyone on the team, to forget about it. It's in the past," senior linebacker Maurice Crum said in the press conference.

FROM THE PRESS BOX

The first overtime possession took place in the south end zone, but the north end saw some action as well. The sprinklers unexpectedly turned on, causing the game to pause for a few minutes until the field crew was able to take care of the situation. Presumably on a timer system, the mistake was a symbol of the longest game ever at Notre Dame Stadium.

BOSTON COLLEGE



A BC Beatdown

BOSTON COLLEGE 17. NOTRE DAME O

Mimi DiSipio

or Irish fans who made the trek to Chestnut Hill, Mass., for the Nov. 8 meeting between Notre Dame and the Boston College Eagles, two things were painfully clear as they exited Alumni Stadium: first, it would take days for their rain gear to dry out, and second, Notre Dame was no longer winning the "Holy War."

The 17-0 Eagles' win — the first shutout for either team in the history of the match-up — evened out the series with nine wins apiece. The shutout, BC's third of the season, extended the Eagles' winning streak to six in a row against Notre Dame and ensured their spot in a bowl game for the tenth straight year.

The BC defense held Notre Dame to just 66 yards rushing while collecting five turnovers and blocking a punt. At the close of the first quarter, the Eagles took a 3-0 lead when BC senior Steve Aponavicius, the walk-on place kicker

who was the "feel-good" story for BC last season, made his second field goal attempt of the game. Midway through the second quarter, Irish fans held their breath as sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen looked downfield and overthrew his receiver. BC's senior safety Paul Anderson made his first of two interceptions for the game and followed his blockers 76 yards straight to the end zone, increasing the Eagles' lead to 10-

The lead grew to 17-0 after sophomore wide receiver Golden Tate fumbled a punt and BC's sophomore defensive end Brad Newman fell on the ball at the Irish 48-yard line. With 10:27 left in the third quarter, senior quarterback Chris Crane, who completed just nine of 22 passes for 79 yards, brought BC to the 9-yard line before hitting senior wide receiver Brandon Robinson for a touchdown.

The score remained 17-0 despite the efforts of Eagles' sophomore wide receiver Ifeanyi Momah, who blocked a punt, and sophomore quarterback Codi Boek, who recovered the ball at the Irish 31-yard line. Aponavicius also missed a 32-yard field goal attempt.

The Irish made a final attempt at redemption with three minutes left on the clock when Clausen brought the ball to the BC 26-yard line before he was picked off by freshman cornerback Donnie Fletcher. The Eagles let the remaining seconds on the game clock run out, taking with them any hopes for an Irish comeback.

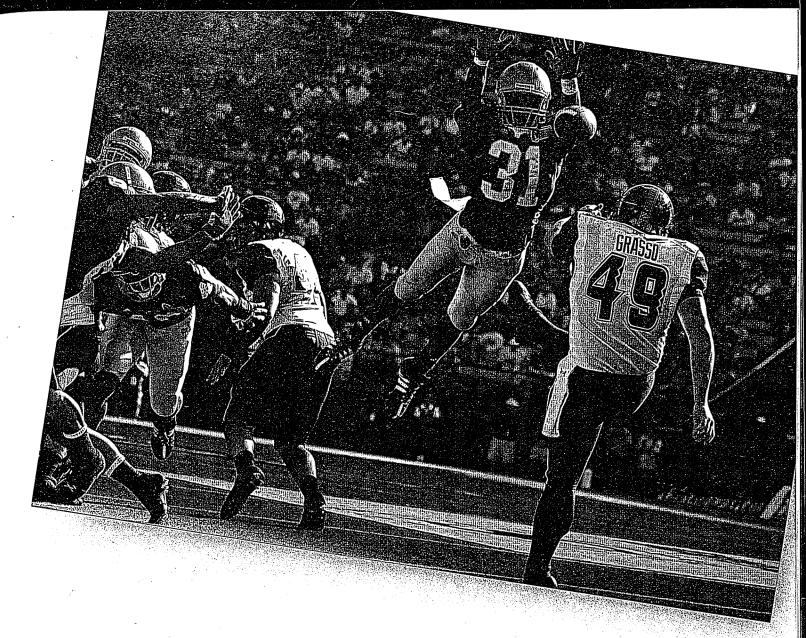
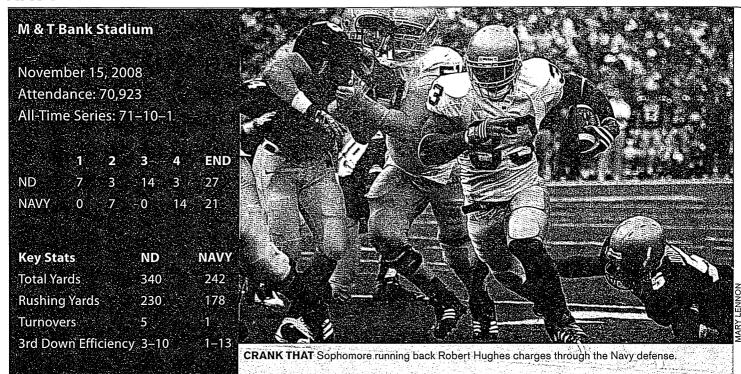


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The Streak Begins Again

NOTRE DAME 27, NAVY 21

Kathleen Toohill

rish fans let out a collective moan of despair in 2007 when Notre Dame narrowly lost to Navy, shattering its 43-game winning streak against the Midshipmen. Irish coach Charlie Weis and his team were well aware of the disappointment and anger that would ensue should the Irish lose to the Midshipmen for a second consecutive year.

Weis prepared the team for the game as rumblings of disapproval from his critics mounted, generating questions about his job security. Notre Dame needed to recover from two tough defeats from Pittsburgh and Boston College, which perhaps influenced Weis' decision to call the offensive plays for this game. A cloudy, windy November day greeted the two opponents in Baltimore, as Notre Dame set out to redeem itself and make last year's defeat a distant memory.

The Irish defense shut down the Midshipmen on their opening drive, the first team to do so all season. Notre Dame took the lead in the first quarter after senior cornerback Mike Anello blocked Navy's punt and junior inside linebacker Toryan Smith snagged the ball and ran it in for a touchdown.

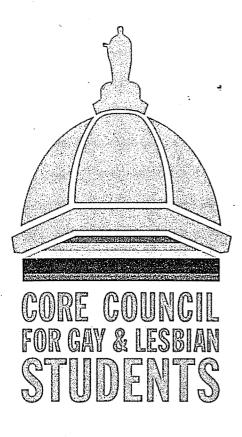
The Irish failed to get a first down at the start of the second quarter and, for the first time since 2004, punted to Navy. Navy managed to even the score with a touchdown by junior running back Cory Finnerty, but the Irish pulled ahead before the end of the half with a 28-yard field goal by sophomore kicker Brandon Walker, closing the half with the Irish up

Sophomore running back Armando Allen got the Irish off to a strong start in the second half with a series of three carries ending in an 11-yard touchdown run. The Irish defense stiffened and held Navy to a three-and-out. During the next Irish possession, sophomore running back Robert Hughes' 7-yard touchdown run led to 24-7 lead.

In the fourth quarter, things began to fall apart for the Irish as the rain poured down on the field. Senior quarterback

Evan Sharpley stepped in for sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen, and freshman halfback Jonas Gray had an excellent series of runs before fumbling at the Navy 5-yard line. With only 1:39 left, Navy's senior running back Shun White broke through the Irish defense for a 24yard touchdown run. The Midshipmen recovered an onside kick on the ensuing kickoff, and a 40-yard pass put Navy on the 1-yard line. Navy scored, narrowing the score to 27-21 with only 1:21 remaining. The Midshpmen recovered a second onside kick, but the Irish defense managed to hold down Navy and secure a narrow victory.

In a game that was too close for comfort for the Irish, Notre Dame emerged with a record of 6-4, making them bowleligible. "We made the game a little too exciting at the end," Clausen said in a post-game press conference. "But we're happy to come out with the victory." §



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(Information, education, and resources)

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Office of Campus Ministry

(Annual retreat for gay/lesbian/questioning students and their friends; pertinent library resources in 304 Co-Mo; discussion and support)

Contact: Fr. Joe Carey, CSC, at 1-7800

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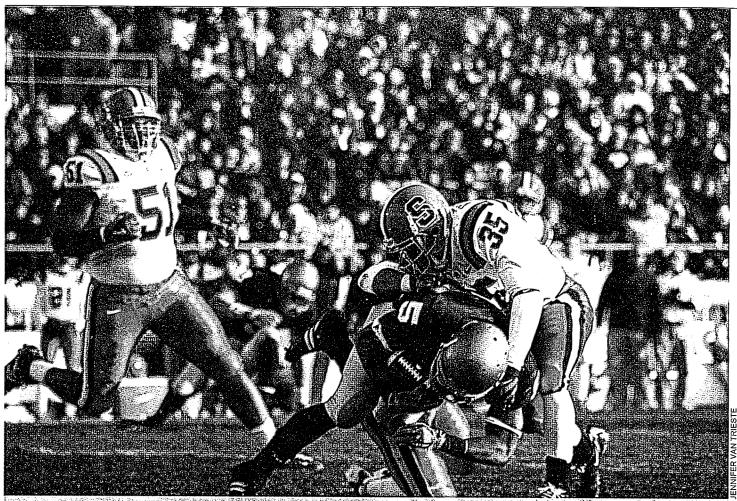
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LEADING THE CHARGE Sophomore running back Armando Allen led the Irish in rushing yards with 621 for the season.

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SYRACUSE 24, NOTRE DAME 23

Kate Mullaney

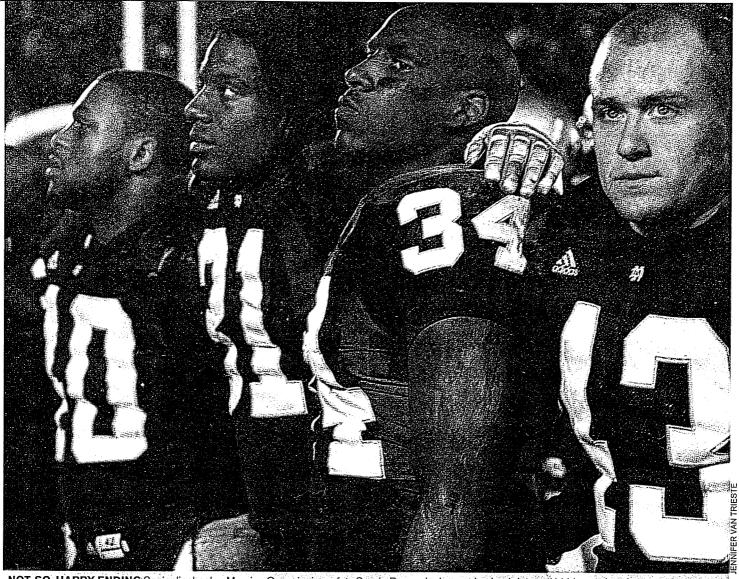
earing the end of a season during which hopes, like the temperature in South Bend, cooled down considerably with time, the Irish could certainly have used a warm, fuzzy victory on Nov. 22, the final home game of 2008. Unfortunately, the Syracuse Orange, coming into the contest with a 2-8 record and a lameduck coach, rallied in the fourth quarter to upset the Irish 24-23 and brought Notre Dame's record to 6-5, leaving hopeful fans out in the cold.

Sophomore kicker Brandon Walker started things off early for the Irish with a 34-yard field goal, but Syracuse's senior kicker Patrick Shadle answered with three points of his own at the end of the first quarter. Soon after, Syracuse took the lead with a touchdown run by

senior running back Curtis Brinkley.

A 45-yard kick by Walker and a 35-yard pass from sophomore quarterback Jimmy Clausen to fellow sophomore receiver Golden Tate, however, enabled the Irish to take a 13-10 lead to end the half. With minutes to go in the third quarter, Clausen found Tate again, giving Notre Dame a 10-point lead. Walker further widened the gap soon after with a 23-yard field goal.

The tide turned against the Irish in the fourth quarter with an early touchdown by freshman running back Antwon Bailey for the Orange. Walker then attempted a 49yard field goal but missed. Syracuse senior quarterback Cameron Dantley followed with a touchdown pass to sophomore receiver Dante Davis with 42 seconds remaining on



NOT-SO-HAPPY ENDING Senior linebacker Maurice Crum, junior safety Sergio Brown, junior running back James Aldridge and senior cornerback John Leonis sway to the Alma Mater on the field in Notre Dame Stadium for the last time in 2008 — and for Crum and Leonis, the last time ever.

the clock.

In Notre Dame's final drive, Head Coach Charlie Weis opted to have Walker kick with 7 seconds left rather than trying to run another play. Walker attempted what would have been a career-long 53-yard kick, but again came up short.

Despite besting Syracuse in total yards, the Irish offense was unable to deliver in the game's biggest moments. Notre Dame had optimum field position inside the Syracuse 25-yard line several times, but they only converted one of these drives into points - a field goal in the third quarter. Senior defensive end Pat Kuntz said after the game, "It's tough because we had the game under wraps, and we didn't capitalize and put them away. They took advantage of more plays than we

did at the end."

Weis resumed offensive play-calling in the contest, taking over the duties he had delegated to offensive coordinator Mike Haywood at the beginning of the season, but the offense only managed 41 total rushing yards. The results for the passing game, however, were more positive for the Irish. Clausen connected with Tate seven times for a total of 146 receiving yards and two touchdowns.

The stunning victory provided Syracuse Head Coach Greg Robinson with some vindication; he was fired less than a week before the game took place, effective at the end of Syracuse's 2008 season.

FROM THE PRESS BOX

Ten inches of snow blanketed South Bend the day before the Orange came to town, providing ampleammunition for snowball lights in the student section. It wasn't long before snow found its way toward the Notre Dame sidelines, resulting in media speculation that the students were aiming at players and St. Joseph County police, a claim many students denied. Freshman tackle Ian Williams, freshman defensive end Ethan Johnson, senior defensive end Pat Kuntz and a police officer were hit, causing other officers to remove at least one fan from the stands.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Trojans Ride Off With a Win

Southern California 38, Notre Dame 3

Vanessa Adjei

he tension of the Notre Dame-USC rivalry was evident before their 2008 game even kicked off. About 45 minutes after the Irish entered the Los Angeles Coliseum, a brief skirmish broke out on the field between the two teams. Officials and both coaching staffs were able to put a stop to the conflict quickly. Unfortunately, that was about the most fight the Irish could muster.

The Irish suffered a staggering defeat to the Trojans, contributing to growing speculation about the job security of Notre Dame Head Coach Charlie Weis. The loss added another chapter to a rivalry that began in 1926.

In the first quarter, junior Trojan running back Stafon Johnson scored on a 2-yard run to give the Trojans a 7-0 lead. An interception in the second quarter by senior linebacker Kaluka Maiava on the first play of an Irish drive set up sophomore tailback Joe McKnight for a 55-yard touchdown run for USC.

With 24 seconds remaining in the half, junior quarterback Mark Sanchez failed to advance the USC offense, and the Trojans settled for a 35-yard field goal. The halftime score was 24-0, and the Irish had not yet made a single first down against the Trojan defense.

USC sophomore running back C.J. Gable's 1-yard run in the third quarter brought the score to 31-0. Irish junior running back James Aldridge finally broke loose on the last play of the third quarter, providing the first Irish first down of the game.

On the second play of the final quarter, the Irish finally crossed midfield. After the Irish reached the USC 23-yard line, sophomore kicker Brandon Walker prevented the Trojans from logging their fourth shutout of the year with a 41-yard field goal.

Unfortunately, these would be the only points for the Irish, and USC easily finished off the 38-3 victory.

Despite the loss, the Irish remained hope-

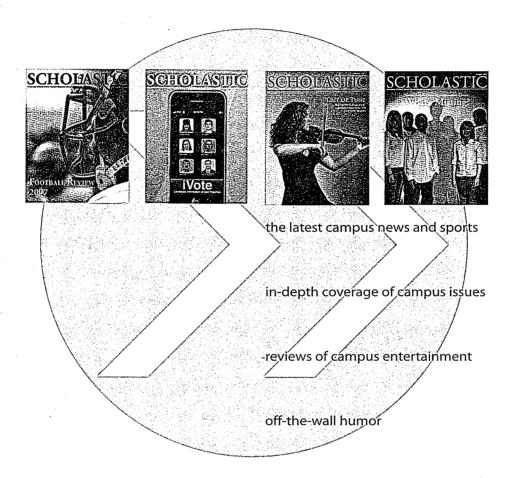
ful. "We have the talent. They made more plays than we did, and that's what good teams do," senior Notre Dame defensive end Pat Kuntz said in the post-game press confer-

After the game, Weis faced many questions about the future of his position. "I'm the head coach at Notre Dame. When the time comes sometime in my career, either by my choice or their choice, they're going to tell me I'm not the head coach at Notre Dame. But right now, my intent is to finish this press conference," Weis said.

At the time, Notre Dame Athletic Director Jack Swarbrick said nothing would be decided concerning Weis at that point.

"We sit down and evaluate every program the same way at the end of the season. We look at a host of factors, from graduation rate to GPA, and we ask, 'How can we make things better?' That's the way we do it," Swarbrick

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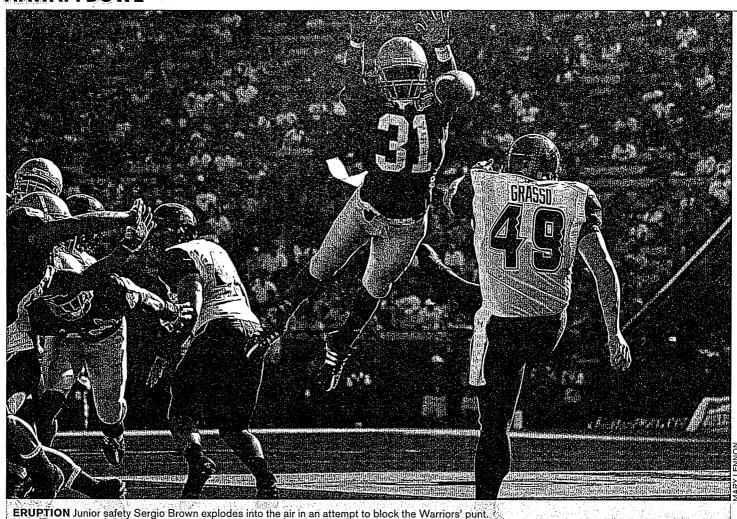
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Total Ya	rds		478	358
Passing	Yards		413	326
Yards P	er Pas:	5	14.8	7.4
Sacks			8	2

NOTRE DAME 49. HAWAII 21

Josh Flynt

ome families have a tradition of opening one present on Christmas Eve, and this year, Irish fans were also treated to an early gift. Notre Dame closed out the 2008 campaign with an impressive 49-21 victory over the Hawai'i Warriors in the Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl. The performance ended a 9game bowl-losing streak and provided Irish Head Coach Charlie Weis with a present that was sweeter than anything in Santa's sleigh.

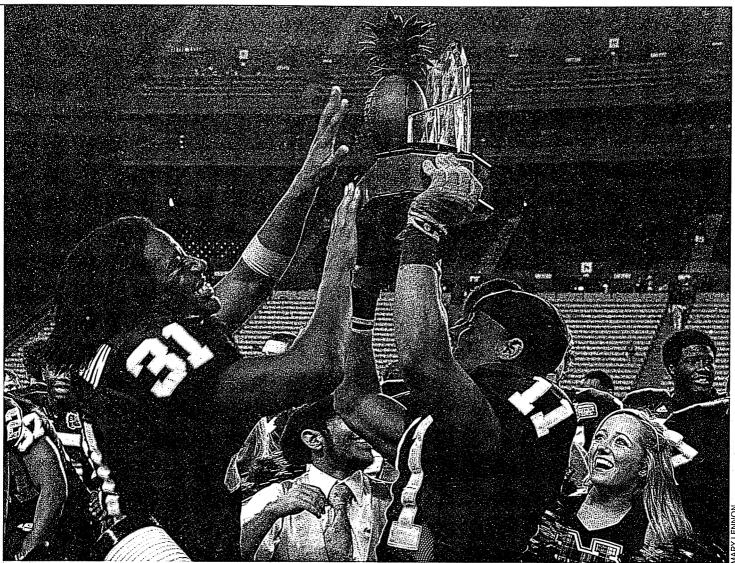
"I told the team that's the only thing I wanted. I just wanted to win a bowl game," Weis said in the post game press conference.

Some critics questioned the true colors of the 6-6 Irish team. With just one victory over a team with a winning record (Navy), Notre Dame desperately needed a stellar performance against Hawai'i. Led by the

sophomore duo of quarterback Jimmy Clausen and wide receiver Golden Tate, the offense exploded. Clausen set Notre Dame bowl records and career highs with 401 passing yards, five touchdowns and an 84.6 completion percentage. Tate also had a career day with six catches totaling 177 yards and three touchdowns.

Due to limited mobility in the knee he injured during the Michigan game, Weis called plays from the coaches' box. With Weis upstairs, the Irish offense clicked on all cylinders, setting team bowl records in points (49), passing yards (413), passing TDs (five) and total yards (478).

After the first quarter, the Irish held a 7-0 lead, but it was during the second quarter that Clausen and his receivers really took over.



PINEAPPLE EXPRESS Junior safety Sergio Brown and senior wide receiver David Grimes are all smiles after the Irish out-hula'd the Warriors on the

The quarterback connected with senior wide receiver David Grimes for a 14-yard score. Following a Hawai'i touchdown, Tate scored on a 69-yard pass to put the Irish up 21-7. With time running out in the half, Clausen hit Tate again for an 18-yard score in the back corner of the end zone. Hawai'i challenged the play, but replays verified that Tate had gotten his left foot down before stepping out of bounds.

The Irish came out strong in the second half, scoring an 18-yard touchdown on their first possession — a pass from Clausen to sophomore running back Armando Allen. On the next drive, Clausen and Tate found the end zone for the third time on a 40-yard pass, the quarterback's fifth touchdown of the

Although Clausen and Tate stole the headlines, Allen also played an important role in the victory. Late in the third quarter, the running back returned a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown, extending the lead to 49-14 and out of reach for a Warriors comeback. Allen became the first Irish player to return a kickoff for a score since 2002.

In addition to the fun the Irish had on the

"I think we did a good job coming out, knowing when it's time to goof off and have fun and knowing when it's time to get down to business and practice."

-GOLDEN TATE

field, they also enjoyed themselves off the gridiron. Leaving the cold in South Bend for the heat in Honolulu could have been a distraction, but they were able to find a balance between work and play.

"We had activities after practice, we went to a water park, we went to Pearl Harbor. But at the same time, we knew why we were here," Tate told the Chicago Tribune.

"I think we did a good job coming out, knowing when it's time to goof off and have fun and knowing when it's time to get down to business and practice," Tate said.

Prior to the win in Hawai'i, the last bowl victory for Notre Dame came in the 1994 Cotton Bowl. Although many Domers grow up rooting for the Fighting Irish, the last time ND won a bowl game, current students were still in grade school. The fifteen-year drought means that the Hawai'i Bowl victory was the first that many students were old enough to appreciate. While there is no telling what the future will hold for the Fighting Irish, they closed out 2008 with a performance that left ND fans looking forward to 2009 - and outdid Santa Claus.

STATISTICS

		1975117405									
	NOTRE D	AME	OPPONE	NTS	PASSING	Effic (S. R. S.	at a subsect of the wide		Yds T	
SCORING		221		200	Clausen, Jimmy	132.5	268 44		60.9		25 26
Points Per Game		321 24.7		288 22.2	Sharpley, Evan	90.2	3	5 0	60.0	18	0 (
FIRST DOWNS		250		232	TEAM	0.0	0	2 0	0.0	0	0 (
Rushing		91		93	Total	131.4 109.8	271 44 228 42		6 0.6 54.0		25 69 15 54
Passing		132		122	Opponents	109.8	220 42	.2 14	34.0	23 44	15 54
Penalty		26		17	RECEIVING	No	Yd	s A	vg 🔑	TD	Long
RUSHING YARDAGE		1426		1744	Tate, Golden	58		30 1	8.6	10	69
Yards Gained Rushing		1764		2058	Allen, Armando	50			7.1	2	41
Yards Lost Rushing		338		314	Floyd, Michael	48			5.0	7	5
Rushing Attempts		436		430	Grimes, David	35	Acres Administration of the agreement and	and the same and the second section of	9.2	3	31
Average Per Rush		3.3		4.1	Rudolph, Kyle	29			1.7	. 2	29
Average Per Game		109.7	:	134.2	Kamara, Duval	20	and the area who have now continue.	engin pengangan penganjan penganjan penganjan	0.3	1	28
TDs Rushing		11		18	Hughes, Robert	14		93	6.6	0	15
PASSING YARDAGE		3190		25 44	Parris, Robby	9		0	5.6	0	12
Att-Comp-Int	447-	271-17	422-22		Aldridge, James	3		1	0.3	0	
Average Per Pass		7.1		6.0	Schwapp, Asaph	2		3	6.5	0	10
Average Per Catch		11.8		11.2	Yeatman, Will	2		6	3.0	0	
Average Per Game		245.4	-	195.7	West, George	1		6	6.0	0	
TDs Passing		25		15	Total	271			1.8	25	69
TOTAL OFFENSE		4616		4288	Opponents	228	254	4	112	15	54
Total Plays		883		852	FIELD GOALS	FGM	FG/	A: Po	t 💮	Ĺg	Blk
Average Per Play		5.2		5.0	Walker, Brandon	14	2	4 58	.3	48	0
Average Per Game	_	355.1		329.8	CCOPIDY						1000 mg
KICK RETURNS-YARDS		2-1121		9-972	SCORE BY	1st			Street Street Street Land Co.		Total
PUNT RETURNS-YARDS		26-232		9-175	Notre Dame	69		90	50		
INT RETURNS-YARDS		14-236	17	7-134	Opponents	36	89	57	94	1 12	288
KICK RETURN AVERAGE	_	21.6		16.5	INTERCEPTIONS	No.	Yds	Avo	g	TD	Long
PUNT RETURN AVERAGE	=	8.9		6.0	Bruton, David	4	\$18,800 miles \$2,000 \$2,000			0	39
INT RETURN AVERAGE		16.9		7.9	Blanton, Robert	2				i	47
FUMBLES-LOST		23-11		7-11	McCarthy, Kyle	2	والمراها أواوا والواليان فيستوان والمتارك	وأحواصها فريدر بالمطارعين المعاورة تعبوا	0	0	8
PENALTIES-YARDS		70-649	95	5-834	Gray, Gary	2			5	0	41
Average Per Game PUNTS-YARDS	-	49.9		64.2	McNeil, Raeshon	2				0	43
		6-2218	/3.	2794	Kuntz, Pat	1		0.	0	0	0
Average Per Punt		39.6 35.1		37.3	Neal, Kerry	1	. 2	2.	0	0	2
Net Punt Average TIME OF POSSESSION/		31:17		33.4	Total	14	236	16.	9	1	47
GAME		31:17	4	28:43	Opponents	17	134	7.	9	2	76
3RD-DOWN CONVERSIONS		63/180	57	7/174			Market and the control of	117 *10 A 1981* - No. N			2000
3rd-Down Pct		35%		33%	PUNTING	∴ No.	The second second	TARREST TO SERVICE	man the real parts of the same	In-20	Blkd
4TH-DOWN		11/30		5/13	Maust, Eric	54		41.1	54		2
CONVERSIONS 4th-Down Pct		37%		38%	TEAM Total	2		0.0	0		0
SACKS BY-YARDS	•	37% 26-195		38% !-185		56 75		39.6	54 58		2
MISC. YARDS		20-193	22	0	Opponents	/3	2794	37.7	38	20	3
TOUCHDOWNS SCORED)	40		35	PUNT RETURN	No	. Yd	s A	vg	· · TD	Long
FIELD GOALS-ATTEMPT		14-24	1	5-21	Tate, Golden	14	- 11	6	8.3	0	42
RED-ZONE SCORES	-	31-44		36-4 4	Allen, Armando	7	· 6	6	9.4	0	22
PAT-ATTEMPTS		39-40		33-34	McNeil, Raeshon	1	A CONTROL OF THE PARTY OF THE P	3	3.0	0	3
ATTENDANCE	4	84,770		3,210	Smith, Scott	- 1		6	6.0	0	6
Games/Avg Per Game		'80,795		4,702	Grimes, David	1			4.0	0	0
James 11. g 1 0. James		00,775	0,0	1,7 02	West, George	1	A STATE OF THE PARTY OF THE PAR	3	3.0	0	3
BUCKUS COMPANY	Charles and a second constitution of the second				Anello, Mike	1			8.0	0	0
RUSHING At	: Net Avg	∵TD*	Long Ave	J/G	Smith, Toryan	. 0		4	0.0	1	14
Aldridge, James 91	357 3.9	3	19 29	er ett mener meg	Total	26			8.9	1	41
Allen, Armando 134	Andreas are a constituted in the constitute of the constitution of	3	21 45	.0	Opponents	29	17	5	6.0	0	38
Gray, Jonas 21	90 4.3	. 0	19 12	they descriped to grid a	KICKOEEC	e NI	(7) Shooks AV	I CONTRACTOR		ONTO	
Grimes, David 2	15 7.5	. 0	10 1.	unary and	KICKOFFS Burkhart, Ryan	No 62	the state of the state of the state of the state of	NAME OF TAXABLE PARTY.	vg 51.1	TB	OB
Hughes, Robert 112	the state of the s	4	18 31	united to spike three	Walker, Brandon	.0.	not established of about any and		10.0	1 0	0
Maust, Eric 12	-8 -8.0	0		.6	Total	63			0.8	0	2
Schwapp, Asaph 1	2 2.0	0	2 0.		Opponents	50					0
Sharpley, Evan 4	1 0.2	0	2 0.						54.4	5	
Smith, Harrison 2	58 29.0	0	35 4.		FUMBLE RETURN	v No	· Yc	ls A	vg	TD	Long
	37 7.4	11		8	Smith, Toryan		1	8	8.0	0	8
Tate, Golden 5			. 10	6	Smith, Brian		1	35 3	5.0	1	35 2
Tate, Golden5Clausen, Jimmy54	-73 -1.4	0	10 -5.			وعشاء ومدري وراجات	one in a continue to the continue to the	an and account of the second of the second		مهمد مهديد عثمية أنهاء ومبارث مهم	
Clausen, Jimmy 54					Kuntz, Pat		1	2	2.0	0	
Clausen, Jimmy 54 TEAM 9	-20 -2.2	Ö	0 -2.	.0	Kuntz, Pat Gray, Gary	- (0 .	2 20	2.0	0 0	20
Clausen, Jimmy 54	-20 -2.2 1426 3.3		0 -2.	.0	Kuntz, Pat		0 .	2 20	2.0	0	

DEFENSIVE	30	т	áckle		TFĹ	M=00000	e Pas	S		asterio	
LEADERS	GP	Solo	Ast	Ttl	Vas	Sacks No-vds	Defei Int-Yds	ise	Fumb	es	艜
McCarthy, Kyle	13	64	46	110	3.5-12	0-0	2-18	3	0-0	1	0
Bruton, David	13	61	36	97	1.5-5	0-0	4-57	10	2-0	2	0
Crum, Maurice	13	33	32	65	5.5-36	3.0-24	0-0	1	0-0	2	0
Smith, Harrison	13	39	18	57	8.5-39	3.5-26	0-0	7	0-0	0	C
Smith, Brian	11	. 33	21	54	4.0-33	2.0-23	0-0	2	2-35	1	0
Kuntz, Pat	13	19	23	42	8.0-38	3.5-26	1-3	2	1-2	0	O
McNeil, Raeshon	13	28	13	41	0	0-0	2-47	13	0-0	0	0
Williams, Ian	13	18	22	40	205	0-0	0-0	13	0-0	0	C
Blanton, Robert	12	26	7	33	0-0	0-0	2-47	5	0-0	0	o
Lambert, Terrail	11	20	13	33	0-0	0-0	1-1	4	0-0	0	Ô
Brown, Sergio	13	21	7	28	2.0-15	1.0-12	0-0	6	1-0	0	1
Neal, Kerry	13	11	14	25	4.0-19	2.0-15	1-2	2	0-0	0	Ô
Brown, Justin	13	10	14	24	4.5-5	0-0	0-0	0	1-0	Ö	···· 0
Fleming, Darius	13	13	11	24	2.5-20	2.5-20	- 1-25	0	0-0	0	0
Anello, Mike	12	15	8	23	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1-0	2	1
Johnson, Ethan	13	9	9	18	5.0-21	3.5-17	0-0	2	0-0	0	0
Smith, Toryan	10	11	7	18	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	1-8	0	0
Herring, Ray	13	12	5	17	0.5-2	0.5-2	0-0	0	0-0	0	Ô
Gray, Gary	9	15	0	15	0-0	0-0	2-65	4	0-20	0	- 0
Ouinn, Steve	13	13	1	14	3.0-22	3.0-22	0-0	0	0-0		0
Smith, Scott	13	9	3	12	1.0-3	1.0-3	0-0	0	- 0-0	1	0
Richardson, Morrice	11	8	3	11	0.5-5	0.5-5	0-0	0	0-0	0	0
Ryan, John	12	2	5	7	0-0	0-0	0-0	2	2-0	0	0
Gordon, Leonard	13	3	2	5	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	0
Nwankwo, Emeka	7	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	0
Maust, Eric	13	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	0
Washington, Kevin	5	0	ī	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	o .	0
Tate, Golden	13	1	0	<u>-</u>	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	0
Floyd, Michael	11	1	. 0	1	0-0	- 0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	- o
Kamara, Duval	13	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	0
Brooks, Kevin	13	0	1.	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	ō
McDonald, Anthony	I	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	ő
Filer, Steve	11	1	0		0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	ő
Leonis, John	2	1	0	Ī	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	<u>ŏ</u>	ő
Olsen, Eric	13	î	0	<u>i</u> -	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	- 0	0
Grimes, David	11	1	0	<u>î</u>	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	0-0	0	ő
Mullen, Paddy	12	ō	0	Ô	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0-0	- 0	0
TEAM	10	3	0	3	1.0-1	0-0	0-0	ó	0-0	0	1
Total	13	508	322	830	60-295	26-195	14-236	67	11-65	9	3
Opponents	13	498	410	908	81-343	22-185	17-134	61	10-0	14	2
Opponents	1,7	770	710	700	31-373	22-103	17-134	O1	10-0	14	2

AND	ACTION ASSESSED.	***************************************		owere regree	ALCO PROPERTY.	Mark Control of the C		
ALL PURPOSE		Rush	STATE OF THE PARTY	PR	KOR	, IR		Avg/G
Tate, Golden	13	37	1080	116	521	0	1754	134.9
Allen, Armando	13	585	355	66	543	0	1549	119.2
Floyd, Michael	11	0	719	0	0	0	719	65.4
Hughes, Robert	12	382	93	0	0	0	475	39.6
Aldridge, James	12	357	1	0	15	0	373	31.1
Rudolph, Kyle	13	0	340	0	0	0	340	26.2
Grimes, David	11	15	321	-4	0	0	332	30.2
Kamara, Duval	13	0	206	0	0	0	206	15.8
Gray, Jonas	7	90	0	0	9	0	99	14.1
Gray, Gary	9	0	0	0	0	65	65	7.2
Smith, Harrison	13	58	0	0	0	0	58	4.5
Bruton, David	13	0	0	0	0	57	57	4.4
Parris, Robby	7	0	50	0	0	0	50	7.1
McNeil, Raeshon	13	0	0	3	0	47	50	3.8
Blanton, Robert	12	0	0	0	0	47	47	3.9
West, George	5	0	6	3	33	0	42	8.4
Anello, Mike	12	0	0	28	0	0	28	2.3
McCarthy, Kyle	13	0	0	0	0	18	18	1.4
Schwapp, Asaph	13	2	13	0	0	0	15	1.2
Smith, Toryan	10	0	0	14	0	0	14	1.4
Yeatman, Will	3	0	6	0	0	0	6	-2.0
Smith, Scott	13	0	0	6	0	0	, 6	0.5
Neal, Kerry	13	.0	0	0	0	2	2	0.2
Sharpley, Evan	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.3
Maust, Eric	13	-8	0	0	0	0	-8	-0.6
Clausen, Jimmy	13	-73	0	0	0	0	-73	-5.6
TEAM	10	-20	0	0	0	0	-20	-2.0
Total	13	1426	3190	232	1121	236	6205	477.3
Opponents	13	1744	2544	175	972	134	5569	428.4

and the contract of the Arran State of the San Contract of the	No.	VOS.	AVO	יטו	rong
Tate, Golden	26	521	20.0	0	30
Allen, Armando	21	543	25.9	1	96
Gray, Jonas	2	9	4.5	0	5
Aldridge, James	1	15	15.0	0	15
West, George	1	33	33.0	0	33
TEAM	1	0	0.0	0	0
Total	52	1121	21.6	1	96
Opponents	59	972	16.5	0	37

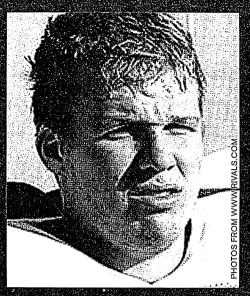
TOTAL OFFENSI	E G	Plays	Rush	Pass	Total	Avg
Clausen, Jimmy	13	494	-73	3172	3099	238.4
Allen, Armando	13	134	585	0	585	45.0
Hughes, Robert	12	112	382	0	382	31.8
Aldridge, James	12	91	357	0	357	29.8
Gray, Jonas	7	21	90	0	90	12.9
Smith, Harrison	13	2	58	0	58	4.5
Tate, Golden	13	5	37	0	37	2.8
Sharpley, Evan	3	9	1	18	19	6.3
Grimes, David	11	2	15	0	15	1.4
Schwapp, Asaph	13	1	2	0	2	0.2
Maust, Eric	13	1	-8	0	-8	-0.6
TEAM	10	11	-20	0	-20	-2.0
Total	13	883	1426	3190	4616	355.1
Opponents	13	852	1744	2544	4288	329.8

2008 Sched	ule and Results		
September 6	SAN DIEGO STATE	W	21-13
September 13	MICHIGAN	W	35-17
September 20	at Michigan State	L	7-23
September 27	PURDUE -	W	38-21
October 4	STANFORD	W	28-21
October 11	at North Carolina	L	24-29
October 25	at Washington	W	33-7
November 1	PITTSBURGH	L	33-36
November 8	at Boston College	L	0-17
November 15	at Navy	W	27-21
November 22	SYRACUSE	L	23-24
November 29	at Southern California	L	3-38
December 24	Hawai'i (Sheraton Hawai'i Bowl)	W	49-21

2009 Schedule	
September 5	NEVADA
September 12	at Michigan
September 19	MICHIGAN STATE
September 26	at Purdue
Octber 3	WASHINGTON
October 10	Open Date
October 17	Southern California
October 24	BOSTON COLLEGE
October 31	vs. Washington State (at San Antonio, Texas)
November 7	NAVY
November 21	CONNECTICUT
November 28	at Stanford

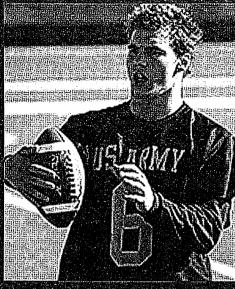
Stars in the Making

Meet next year's playmakers



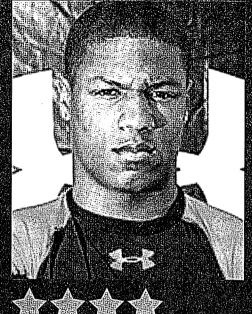
CHRIS WATT, No. 1 Offensive Guard (as rated by Scout.com)

NEWENT



ZEKE MOTTA, *No. 10 Linebacker* Tackles: 143 Blocked Kicks: 5

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SHAQUELLE EVANS, No. 12 Wide Reciever Yards: 700 Touchdowns: 6

Matt Formica

ear after year of Charlie Weis' tenure, Notre Dame has boasted one of the most talented recruiting classes in the nation, and the group of players joining the Fighting Irish next season continues this tradition. Although Irish fans should certainly be excited about the upcoming 2009 campaign, recent history has taught us that experiencing recruiting success doesn't necessarily translate to victories on the gridiron.

With verbal commitments from 17 of the nation's most skilled players, Notre Dame currently has the twentieth strongest recruiting class in the country, as rated by Scout.com. Of this group, six standouts are ranked in ESPN's top 150 recruits. With National Signing Day rapidly approaching on Feb. 4, the Irish will attempt to secure a few more players to complement an already promising gang.

Offensive Recruits

Notre Dame's current roster features an abundance of talented, young offensive players who possess great potential. Shaquelle Evans (Inglewood, Calif.) will bolster an already strong group of wide receivers. The 6-foot-2-inch Evans will join rising sophomore Michael Floyd and rising juniors Duval Kamara and Golden Tate as rising junior quarterback Jimmy Clausen's primary targets. Evans should be able to use his size to elevate above opposing defensive backs and haul in some long passes. Additionally, one of Evans' strengths is his ability to break tackles and rack up yards after the catch. "He is explosive with the ball in his hands," according to Scout.com.

Cierre Wood (Santa Clara, Calif.) provides the Irish an ability to contribute on both sides of the ball, as he played both running back and cornerback in high school. Wood, who scored an astounding 42 touchdowns during his junior season, is very elusive and has the ability to improvise when a play breaks down. With the loss of senior safety David Bruton to graduation, Wood is a candidate to fill in at safety as well.

There is no denying that Notre Dame's offensive line improved greatly last season and protected Clausen far better than it did in 2007. The men in the trenches can still

improve their run blocking, however, as they struggled to open holes for the running backs to squeeze through. Chris Watt will certainly help that endeavor. Watt, a five-star recruit from Chicagoland, has been called "one of the best run blockers in the Midwest" by Scout.com. Watt said he believes one of the keys to his success is that he is aggressive at the point of contact. Alex Bullard (Brentwood, Tenn.) is ranked as the seventh best offensive guard in the nation by Scout.com, and offensive tackle Zach Martin (Indianapolis, Ind.) will also join the squad

Theo Riddick (Somerville, N. J.) is similar to Wood in that he can play both running back and safety. Riddick is a shifty running back and a strong tackler, so he will definitely compete for playing time once the coaching staff decides what position fits him best.

For the second straight year, Notre Dame brings in a strong tight end. The 6-foot-6-inch Tyler Eifert (Fort Wayne, Ind.) can use his height to his advantage and will be able to learn a lot from rising sophomore tight end Kyle Rudolph.

Coaching Changes

offensive line coach for the Irish, replacing John Latina: Verducci, most recently an offensive assistant coach for the NFL's Cleveland Browns; has also spent much time in both the collegiate and professional

ranks; working for the Buffalo Bills. Dallas

Cowboys and Cincinnati Bengals, in addition

to 19 years on the college level at lowa

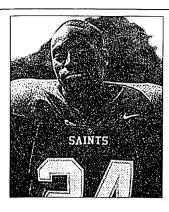
Northwestern, Northern Illinois, Maryland

The Irish have also added Tony Alford as: running backs: coach: Alford; a /14-year coaching veteran, was most recently the running backs coach at the University of Louisville: Prior to that, he also coached at Iowa State, Washington, Kent State and Mount Union: His teams have produced seven 21,000-yard rushers under/his tutelage: Alford replaces Mike Haywood, who was recently hired as the head coach at Miami (Ohio) Though no official announcements have been made as of press time, it is expected that former/San/Francisco: 49er/and/Irish/great/

and Colorado State

as a graduate assistant.

Along with the new batch of recruits Coach Charlie Weis has brought in to invigorate the Irish next year are a few new faces on the coaching staff. Frank Verducci, a 27-year veteran offensive coach, was hired to be the



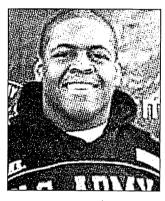
CIERRE WOOD No. 6 Running Back Rushing vards: 2.612 Touchdowns: 42 Average per rush: 14.7



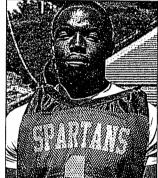
ALEX BULLARD No. 7 Offensive Guard



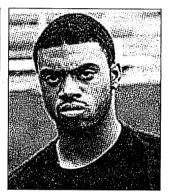
CARLO CALABRESE No. 14 Linebacker Tackles: 104 Sacks: 6



TYLER STOCKTON No. 13 Defensive Tackle Tackles: 73 Sacks: 11



THEO RIDDICK No. 28 Running Back Rushing yards: 1,352 Touchdowns: 23



NYSHIER OLIVER No. 20 Safety Interceptions: 4

Looking Forward

Bryant Young (:94) will be joining the staff

Notre Dame has talent at the skill positions. Clausen improved his arm strength and accuracy last season and will only get better. Floyd is arguably the best young receiver in the nation, and Tate has the ability to make game-changing plays.

The play of the offensive and defensive lines will require the most improvement. During 2008, the Fighting Irish struggled against teams with stronger and more physical linemen. Opposing offenses were able to open huge gaps for their running backs to scamper through unscathed, and opposing defenses provided their quarterbacks with plenty of time to find an open receiver.

As the linemen continue to mature and learn to work as a cohesive unit, the team's win total will hopefully climb. The many young players that received significant playing time this past season will be more experienced and perhaps more prepared next year, which may allow the team to minimize its mistakes and prevail in close contests, which didn't happen in 2008.

Defensive Recruits

Stopping the run must be a priority for Notre Dame's_defense if the team hopes to establish itself among the elite next season. Carlo Calabrese (Verona, N. J.) should help this facet of the Irish's defense improve next season. Calabrese, a middle linebacker, is a force to be reckoned with at 6-feet-2-inches and 225 pounds. He played seven different positions in high school, ranging from kicker to linebacker, and notched 104 solo tackles as a junior. "Calabrese should be a very productive run stopper," according to ESPN.com.

Additionally, Zeke Motta (Vero Beach, Fla.) should see some action next season. Motta is a versatile player who is capable of playing either safety or linebacker. "He plays with the physicality of a linebacker and has the mobility of a defensive back," according to a Scout.com post. Motta, who blocked five kicks during his junior season, knows how to make a contribution on special teams as

Another area in need of improvement

is Notre Dame's pass rush. Excluding the Hawai'i Bowl, the Irish struggled to pressure and sack opposing quarterbacks all season long. The addition of Tyler Stockton, (Princeton, N.J.) to the defensive line is key. Stockton is amazingly quick off the ball and has the tools to either knock an opposing player backward or sneak around him, and he is sure to hurry the opposing quarterback. He has been described as a disruptive force, reminiscent of graduating senior defensive end Pat Kuntz, and he has also been called a "tornado of terror" by ESPN.com.

Nyshier Oliver (Jersey City, N. J.) and E.J. Banks (Mc Kees Rocks, Penn.) are both athletic players that can potentially play safety. Banks has phenomenal hands and is quick, which allows him to play a slew of positions, including safety, cornerback and wide receiver. Oliver, who had initially committed to Tennessee, has the ability to turn a short reception into a game-breaking play, so the coaching staff will have to decide on which side of the ball they want him to



Under the Microscope

2006 ND graduate and Sporting News associate editor Jim Ryan reflects on the 2008 Irish, national attention, and Charlie Weis

Jim Ryan

At times last season, I wished Notre Dame could fly under the radar for a little while. It was enough of a bummer to watch the Irish struggle on Saturday - I didn't want to hear about it on SportsCenter 20 times the following week.

My wish was unrealistic, because Notre Dame is the most popular (and reviled) team in the country. People will always want to watch and read about the Irish, and media outlets are happy to oblige.

In better years, the airtime and column inches devoted to Notre Dame might analyze the quarterback's Heisman candidacy or the team's BCS worthiness. In down years such as 2008, the spotlight is less flattering.

In down years, non-stories become stories. Errant snowballs hitting a few players become students pelting the team to express their displeasure with its performance. (Not that I'm excusing the people who threw snowballs at police officers, cameramen or anyone else on the sideline - your behavior falls short of the standards for Notre Dame students.)

Similarly, unsubstantiated rumors that Jon Gruden is headed to South Bend become "reports" that he will replace Charlie Weis. These "reports" necessitate a denial from the school, which becomes part of a SportsCenter segment.

People who follow the Irish closely know both stories were blown out of proportion, but such is life at Notre Dame, where everything is magnified. Perhaps no figure in college sports is under a greater microscope than the Irish's football coach, as Weis has discovered during the past two

After being hailed as a genius during his

first two campaigns with the Irish, Weis received plenty of flak during the 3-9 debacle of 2007. Big blown leads against North Carolina and Pittsburgh in 2008, along with a humbling shutout at Boston College, weren't inspiring anyone to compare Weis to Vince Lombardi.

But even into mid-November, the Irish seemed to be heading toward a 7-5 record. While Notre Dame fans might have expected better, that's about where the national media predicted Notre Dame would finish.

Then came the Syracuse game.

You know the ugly facts: The Orange were 2-8 entering the game. Greg Robinson had been fired that week. Notre Dame blew a 13-point fourth-quarter lead.

But perhaps the most damning statistic was that the loss dropped Weis' winning percentage with the Irish to 58.3, tying him with Tyrone Willingham.

One of Weis' saving graces after 2007 was that he was still doing better than Ty through three seasons, if only by half a game. Dropping below the Willingham line - as Weis did with a regular season-ending loss to USC — was a cardinal sin in the eyes of many Notre Dame fans, as well as those who didn't believe Willingham should have been fired in the first place.

It's hard to say Weis wasn't held to a different standard than Willingham, but when friends and coworkers asked me if I believed Weis should be fired, I couldn't bring myself to say a definitive yes.

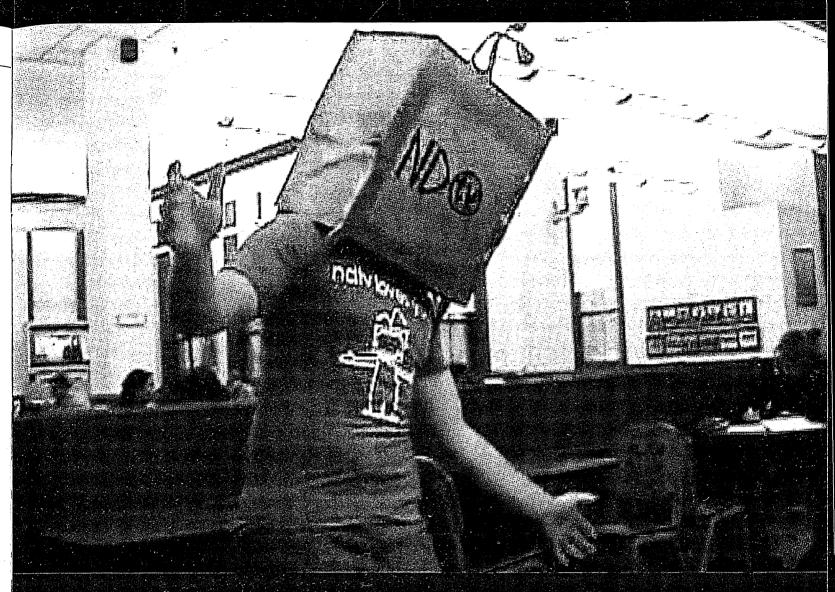
It's easy to work up a rage about a coach and demand that he be fired, but actually making the decision and bearing responsibility for its consequences is a different beast. I do not envy Jack Swarbrick, Father Jenkins, the Board of Trustees or whomever ultimately decided to retain Weis.

On one hand, a majority of Notre Dame fans, alumni and journalists seemed to be calling for Weis' head. The team had underperformed for a second straight season, which was the undoing of its previous coach.

On the other hand, the decision makers had to ask tough questions. Could the university afford Weis' buyout in light of the recessed economy? Did the school want to risk jeopardizing a potentially successful 2009 season, given the team's maturing talent, another heralded crop of freshman and an accommodating schedule? Could anyone be drawn to Notre Dame who would perform better than Weis?

The decision to keep Weis was, I'm sure, a difficult one. Let's hope it was the right one so the banter around Notre Dame football is more positive next year.

Jim Ryan is an associate editor for Sporting News magazine and was co-editor in chief of Scholastic during the 2005-2006 school year.



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