

Weis out after five seasons



IAN GAVLICK/The Observer

At left, then-Irish coach Charlie Weis leaves the field after Saturday's loss at Stanford. At right, Notre Dame director of athletics Jack Swarbrick speaks Monday.

By MATT GAMBER
Sports Editor

Hours after a press release confirmed that Charlie Weis would not return for a sixth year as Notre Dame's head coach, director of athletics Jack Swarbrick said at a press conference Monday "it's time to move forward."

"It is critical to this program and to its place in this University and college football that we compete at the highest level, that we compete for National Championships," Swarbrick said. "And as we go out now and begin our search, that is our focus, in finding the right individual to lead Notre Dame back to place of prominence in college football. The University is better when we do that, college football is better when we do that, and the student athletes who call this place home are better when we do that."

Swarbrick said the decision to fire Weis was ultimately handed down after he made an official recommendation to University President Fr. John Jenkins Sunday night, a day after Notre Dame's fourth consecutive defeat, a 45-38 loss at Stanford, dropped the Irish to 6-6. Swarbrick said Weis had been informed of his recommendation on Saturday night, and that the entire team learned of the decision at a meeting Monday.

Though Monday's announcement was not unexpected, Swarbrick said his final decision was not an easy one to make.

"For many of you who may have thought that was a foregone conclusion, I would say to you that the decision was harder than you might have thought, principally because of the man it involved," Swarbrick said. "Those of us who had the opportunity to work closely with Coach Weis or play for him couldn't help but develop a great affinity for him."

"I hope we can find somebody who loves this University as much as he did, does, and who cared as much about his student athletes as he does."

Swarbrick announced that until a new coach is hired, assistant head coach Rob Ianello would assume the responsibility for football operations. Ianello served as the wide receivers coach and recruiting coordinator and had previously coached at Wisconsin, Arizona and Alabama.

"Rob is a skilled coach and has already played a central role in coordinating our recruiting and I know will provide us with the leadership we need going forward between this period of time and when we have a new coach in place," Swarbrick said.

Swarbrick did not offer a timetable as to when he expected to name Weis' successor, and he said he had not yet

begun to contact any potential replacements.

"It'll have its own pace," Swarbrick said of the coaching search. "We'll begin immediately and move as expeditiously as we can. There is always the possibility that Bowl commitments or other things play a role for some of the people

"As you look at the entire course of the season, it led you to the conclusion that you couldn't have enough confidence that a jump up was imminent, that you could know with sufficient certainty that next year's results would be significantly different."

Jack Swarbrick
director of athletics

we're interested in, but we'll go full bore and close it as fast as we possibly can."

Swarbrick said he has developed a list of criteria that will play a large role in determining who will become Notre Dame's 29th head football coach. He did not offer specifics Monday, but he did say he would favor for a proven college coach.

"I will say that it is important to us to look first and foremost at people who have demonstrated an ability to build and sustain a Division I college football program," Swarbrick said.

Rampant media speculation surrounding Weis' job status began following Notre Dame's 23-21 loss to Navy on Nov. 7.

The Irish defeat was the second in three years to the Midshipmen, who had previously lost 43 straight games to Notre Dame before breaking the streak in 2007.

The Irish never recovered, losing a hard-fought road game to highly ranked Pittsburgh, 27-22, the next week. Notre Dame then dropped its second straight Senior Day game, 33-30 in double overtime to Connecticut, on Nov. 21, before heading to Stanford for the season finale.

The season's disappointing ending came after a 6-2 start rekindled preseason predictions of a BCS berth for the Irish. Swarbrick said the sudden drop-off over the past four weeks played a critical role in his decision.

"As you look at the entire course of the season, it led you to the conclusion that you couldn't have enough confidence that a jump up was imminent, that you could know with sufficient certainty that next year's results would be

significantly different," Swarbrick said. "And so I think that was probably the tipping point."

Weis' dismissal did not come entirely as a surprise to the Notre Dame players, junior receiver Golden Tate said Monday.

"I knew that it was a possibility that he was leaving and I knew it was a possibility he was staying," Tate said. "I took the approach of expecting the worst, but preparing for the best. The administration made an educated decision and I have to support it. I'm in this program and I've got to support the decisions they make and try to make this program a better program."

Swarbrick had in recent weeks denied a variety of reports suggesting Weis had been terminated. Reports had surfaced that Weis was fired before the Connecticut game, and others claimed he cleaned out his office before the team's trip to Stanford. None of those were accurate, Swarbrick reaffirmed Monday.

"He made many contributions to the University, important things which serve us in good stead going forward," Swarbrick said. "He demonstrated that he can bring the very best student athletes to this campus and attract them to come here to play football for Notre Dame, and he demonstrated that once they're here, they can have the full success we expect from student athletes."

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COMMENTARY

Weis not answer, but future is bright

The worst-kept secret in South Bend is finally out of the bag.

Around 3 p.m. Monday, Notre Dame students received an e-mail confirming that Charlie Weis will not return as head football coach next season.

While the announcement may not have come as a surprise, it was a jarring reminder that, for the third time in a row, Notre Dame had failed to find the right coach to return the Irish to their place at the top of the college football world.

By now, everyone knows the damning statistics about Charlie Weis' tenure at Notre Dame. He presided over the worst three-year stretch in Irish history, guiding the team to a 16-21 record since 2007. Losses to Syracuse, Connecticut, Air Force and Navy — twice — rank as some of the most indefensible in Notre Dame history.

The 2007 season will undoubtedly be remembered as the tipping point in Weis' term. From a mismanaged preseason quarterback derby to the first loss to Navy in 44 years, the season set a slew of record lows for the Notre Dame football program. The optimism that surrounded the BCS berths of the previous two seasons was replaced with a now-infamous 3-9 record.

Still, the Irish won their last two games of 2007 and — as Weis himself would often say — the arrow was pointing up.

But Notre Dame struggled to play up to its potential in both of the past two seasons. Sure, there were high points: A rain-soaked win over Michigan in 2008, dominating performances over Hawaii and Nevada and coming oh-so-close to finally beating USC this October.

The systemic deficiencies, though, were present throughout. During Weis' entire tenure, and especially over the past three years, the Irish have suffered from a lack of emphasis on the defensive side of the ball, an ineffective and poorly-developed rushing attack and a general lack of fundamental football skills. The Weis era will likely be remembered for missed tackles, poor line play and wasted opportunity.

In the end, Charlie Weis' greatest shortcoming was simply that he couldn't be something he was not: a college

football head coach. Coming from an X's and O's NFL mentality, Weis never fully understood that college football games are ultimately won and lost in the trenches.

While Golden Tate and Jimmy Clausen have flourished in Weis' pass-first system, players like Armando Allen and Sam Young just haven't quite seemed to live up to their potential.

Amid all the rubble, however, there is hope.

Whoever the next coach is — and there will be plenty of speculation over the next few days — he will inherit a team that is ready to contend for a BCS berth. Not in two years, not down the road, but right away.

Even if Clausen and Tate don't come back next season, the talent is there for the Irish to be an elite football program. Dayne Crist will be a more than capable starting quarterback once he recovers from ACL surgery, and with the flashes Allen has shown, a focus on the running game could elevate him to superstar status.

At the same time, the new head coach will be able to utilize recruiting pipelines that only recently reemerged. With classes consistently ranked at the top of recruiting service rankings, Weis dispelled any myths that Notre Dame could no longer haul in talent with the big boys. Players like Clausen, Michael Floyd and Manti Te'o would be stars wherever they went to school.

More important than anything, though, is that Notre Dame gets this hire right. With no other major college coaching jobs available, there's no excuse for director of athletics Jack Swarbrick to hire anyone other than his No. 1 target, whether that be Bob Stoops, Brian Kelly or someone else.

As reporters were quick to remind Swarbrick at his press conference Monday, it's been 16 years since the Irish contended for a National Championship. Most of the players Notre Dame is currently recruiting were barely a year old then.

If we're going through this same process five years from now, that means Notre Dame is five years closer to being no more than a college football history lesson. If Swarbrick truly wishes to annually contend for BCS berths, now is the time to start.

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

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Sam Werner

Associate Sports Editor

STUDENT REACTION

Students not surprised by firing



IAN GAVLICK/The Observer

Then-Irish coach Charlie Weis leaves the field after Notre Dame lost to Stanford 45-38 Saturday night. Athletic director Jack Swarbrick announced Monday that Weis would not be retained for a sixth season.

By MADELINE BUCKLEY
News Editor

The news of Irish football coach Charlie Weis' firing spread fast across campus. For many students, like senior D.C. Smith, the reaction was simple: "Finally."

"Everyone pretty much saw this coming. It was just a matter of time," Smith said. "I don't know what Notre Dame was thinking when they extended Weis' contract so long in the first place."

Watching four football seasons as a Notre Dame student, Smith said he saw a talented team wasted by poor coaching.

"Weis did well with [former coach Tyrone Willingham's] people but he failed when he played with his own recruits," he said. "But the team has talent."

Junior Dashaun Gasque said Weis' biggest handicap was his coaching on defense.

"He's great offensively but I was disappointed in his defensive tactics this season," Gasque said. "The last game proves that — the defense just wasn't there."

"Weis would do better with an offensive coaching job. He's just not a head coach."

But Gasque said Weis is actually in an enviable position right now.

"He's going to make millions getting fired," he said. "I would like to get fired just to make

that much money."

Junior Maggie Waller said she almost felt bad for Weis, except for the fact that his termination will earn him millions.

"It's terrible that we have to pay him so much," she said. "His contract should never have been extended."

Waller said she believes the downside of Weis being fired is the possibility that quarterback Jimmy Clausen and wide receiver Golden Tate, both juniors, will leave with Weis.

"I'm nervous because I think this means Jimmy and Golden will leave," she said. "I'll cry if Golden leaves."

Freshman Roberto Pellas said he thinks the University made a mistake in firing Charlie because he believes Clausen no longer has an incentive to stay another year.

"This is a huge mistake because Jimmy and Golden are behind him," he said. "We will lose our star players which is disappointing because the team has a lot of talent."

Freshman Neil Eveld said a coaching change is exactly what the football program needs, but the new coach should be chosen carefully.

"They finally fired Weis, but now we better get a big-name to replace him," he said. "[University of Cincinnati head coach] Brian Kelly would be perfect."

Junior Nathan Bush said he thinks people hoping for a big-name replacement will be dis-

appointed.

"Someone like [Florida coach] Urban Meyer would be great, but he's not going to leave his team," he said.

After two disappointing football seasons from Weis, Bush said he had low expectations for this season — and those expectations were met.

"How many games were decided in the last two minutes?" Bush said. "This was a long time coming."

After a couple mediocre seasons, junior Colleen Harris said she expected to hear Weis would not be retained after the Stanford game Saturday.

"All I can say is, he had two Navy losses," she said.

Looking to the future, Waller said she believes the team's performance next season depends on whether Tate and Clausen stay.

But Smith said he thinks next season hinges on the new coach's chemistry with the team.

"We have a lot of talented players," he said. "But Notre Dame is held in high esteem even when they lose, so they aren't hungry enough."

Smith said the next Irish head football coach's challenge will be to motivate the players.

"At ND, the football team is really a business," he said. "It's not fun. A coach needs to make the game fun again."

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For more matchups and pregame analysis, check out the Irish Insider podcast at ndsmcobserver.com/podcast

RECRUITING

Recruits weigh options with Weis out

By **BILL BRINK**
Sports Writer

Regardless of the manifestation of Charlie Weis' coaching abilities, he always whipped up impressive recruiting classes.

Now that recruiting force is gone, and the Irish set about the task of retaining those recruits who have verbally committed while still attracting those who were undecided.

Athletic Director Jack Swar-

brick said he did not expect committed recruits to back out of their verbals because they committed to the University, not necessarily one man.

"The young men that picked this place have picked this place," Swarbrick said. "They were attracted to the coaches they met and no doubt were attracted to Coach Weis and have an affinity for him. But as we've talked to them today and will continue to talk to them, we're hearing the message we would expect to hear,

which is 'I'm very sorry to hear that, but you still offer the things that attracted me to the University, and so I'm still coming.'"

Interim head coach Rob Ianello, who also serves as the recruiting coordinator, agreed with Swarbrick and said Weis' firing may not be the only question mark for potential recruits.

"Anybody that might be wavering I think as recruiting goes might have been wavering no matter what the circumstances might have been," Ianello said. "I

think we're prepared for that, prepared to move forward to try to secure those commitments first and foremost and then move forward to some guys that we're still recruiting that are uncommitted at this time."

Ianello said the staff would be visiting the homes of potential recruits this week.

The coaching change will most likely not affect many of those who have verbally committed, said Mike Frank, a Notre Dame recruiting analyst who runs the ESPN-affiliated site Irishsportsdaily.com

"Most of the committed guys I think you'll see will stick

around," Frank said. "The uncommitted guys, that's going to be the interesting thing. The new coach will have a lot of selling to do."

Frank said if Notre Dame hires a big-name coach, such as Oklahoma's Bob Stoops, Florida's Urban Meyer or former Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach and current ESPN commentator Jon Gruden, signing uncommitted recruits will become easier. Smaller names, like Cincinnati's Brian Kelly, might have more trouble, but Kelly's personable nature may win over some recruits, Frank said.

Swarbrick said the timetable for finding a new head coach is open-ended. Frank said getting the right coach is more important for Notre Dame than finding one quickly.

"Even though it may cost you a few recruits, even though you may take some PR hits, you still have to hold out and get the guy you really need."

Since Ianello was the recruiting coordinator, he has been involved with the recruits throughout the process, something Frank said was a benefit.

"I think it was a very wise move to have him in charge because he's going to know the most about the most important thing at this point, which is recruiting and prospects and the candidates that are left out there," he said.

The potential decision to turn down a bowl game, Frank said, will not affect the recruiting process. In fact, he said it might help to have the coaches visiting the players rather than coaching in a bowl game.

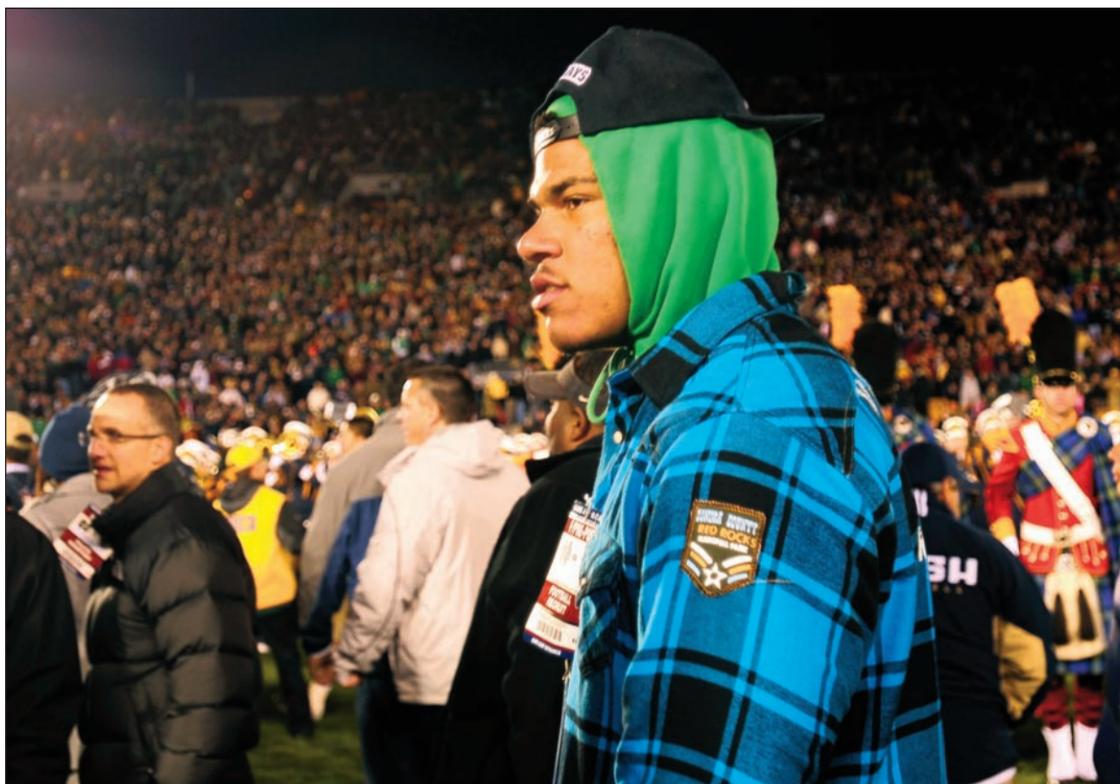
Without Weis, Frank said, some players may de-commit, but others may reconsider.

"A big name or somebody who's a real persuasive guy could come in and possibly grab some guys that aren't currently on the list right now," Frank said.

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out Mike Frank's irishsportsdaily.com.

E-mail Mike at mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net and tell him The Observer sent you.

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IAN GAVLICK/The Observer

Irish five-star defensive end commitment Chris Martin looks around on the field after Notre Dame's 34-27 loss to USC on Oct. 17.

PLAYER REACTION

Squad upset, but understanding, of coach's dismissal

By **MATT GAMBER**
Sports Editor

Monday's announcement that Irish coach Charlie Weis would not be retained didn't come as much of a surprise, but hearing the news from director of athletics Jack Swarbrick still hurt, several Notre Dame players said.

"I'd be lying to say we didn't hear that it was a possibility," said senior safety Kyle McCarthy, who was one of five Irish players made available to the media Monday. "Still, it was tough to hear that it's actually a reality."

Several players described their close relationship with Weis, who will not return to Notre Dame for a sixth season as head coach.

"It's hard to lose a family member, and that's how I see coach Weis," junior receiver Golden Tate said. "These last weeks have been tough for us."

Senior center Eric Olsen said Monday in particular was a tough day, especially when he spoke to Weis after hearing word he had been let go.

"He was kind of trying to

calm me down when I was talking to him today because I was pretty upset," Olsen said. "I just want everyone to know I'm indebted to coach Weis. Giving me a scholarship to play at the University of Notre Dame, it's a huge deal. It's changed my life."

Indicative of the relationships these players forged with Weis is the fact that Tate, along with junior quarterback Jimmy Clausen, will still consult with the former Irish coach Friday to discuss the possibility of forgoing a senior season to enter the NFL Draft.

"As far as I'm concerned, he's still a mentor for me," Tate said. "Every time I've talked to Coach I feel like he's talked to me like I was

[Weis' son] Charlie Jr. And that's a good thing in my eyes. He's always told me the truth, whether I wanted to hear it or not. That's one thing I really respect about him."

Olsen said if he could offer Notre Dame's next head coach some advice, he'd tell him, "heads up."

"He's definitely going to be under the microscope. It's not an easy job," Olsen said. "It takes a special kind of man to



IAN GAVLICK/The Observer

Irish players (from left to right) Golden Tate, Kyle McCarthy, Chris Stewart, Kapron Lewis-Moore and Eric Olsen look on as athletic director Jack Swarbrick announces coach Charlie Weis' firing at a press conference Monday.

fill that spot. You have to have your head on right for sure, or else you'll get swallowed up alive by everything that comes with the coaching job. It takes a Notre Dame guy to be a Notre Dame coach."

While the decision on who that guy will be ultimately rests with Swarbrick, Olsen said regardless of who is

named Weis' successor, a coach alone will not single-handedly turn the Irish program around. Rather, Olsen said, it will be a combination of the coaches and players working together to improve a Notre Dame team that has finished consecutive regular seasons 6-6.

"Sometimes coaching

changes can be a good thing. It kind of breaks up the continuous rituals and stuff that happen in football, and it shakes things up a bit," Olsen said. "But at the same time, a coach can only do so much with Xs and Os and motivating."

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WEIS TIMELINE

The highs and lows of Cha

Weis Timeline – Hired December 13, 2004, Fired November 30, 2009

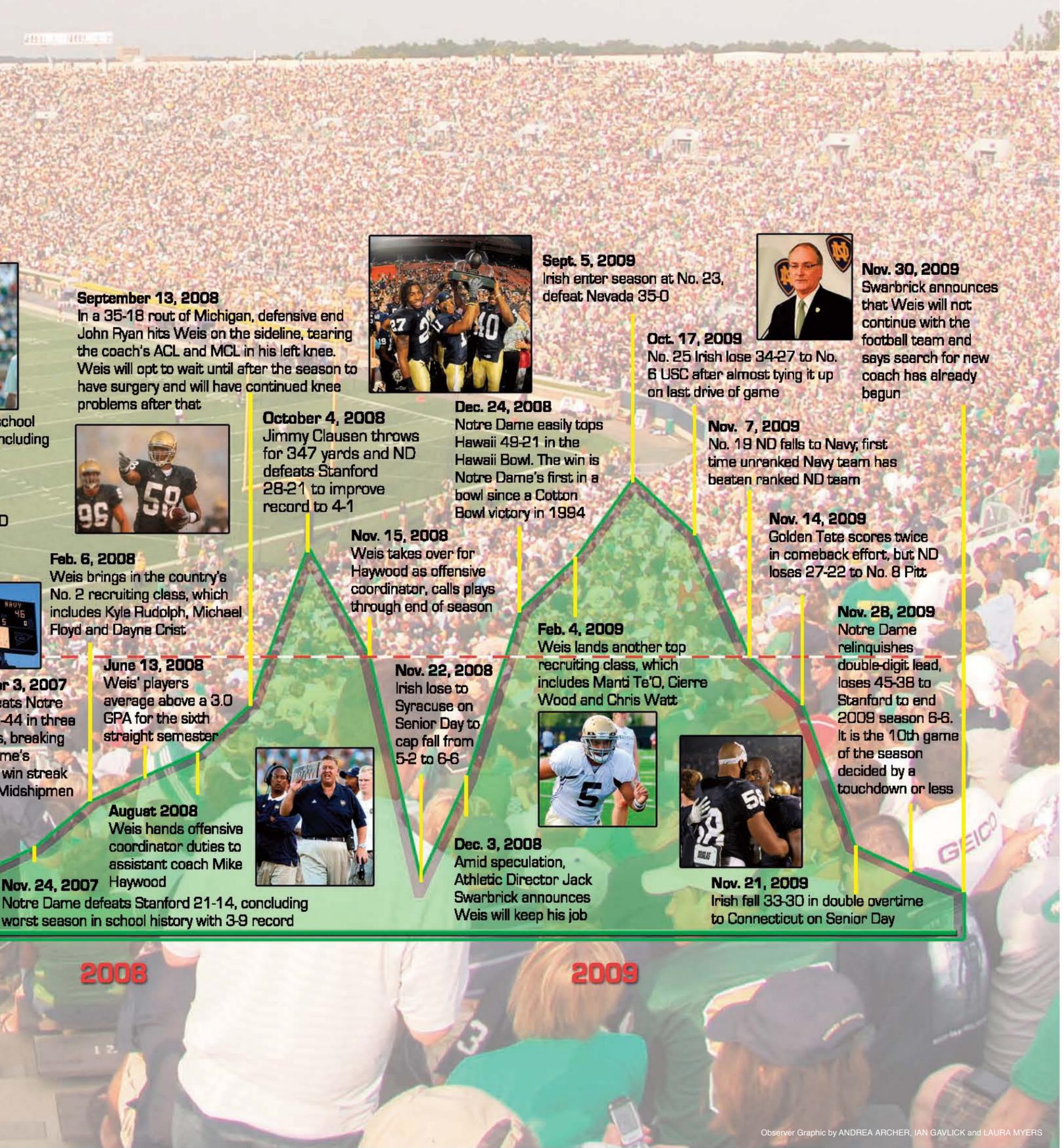


2004 2005

2006

2007

Charlie Weis' five-year tenure



September 13, 2008
 In a 35-18 rout of Michigan, defensive end John Ryan hits Weis on the sideline, tearing the coach's ACL and MCL in his left knee. Weis will opt to wait until after the season to have surgery and will have continued knee problems after that



Sept. 5, 2009
 Irish enter season at No. 23, defeat Nevada 35-0



Nov. 30, 2009
 Swarbrick announces that Weis will not continue with the football team and says search for new coach has already begun

Oct. 17, 2009
 No. 25 Irish lose 34-27 to No. 6 USC after almost tying it up on last drive of game



October 4, 2008
 Jimmy Clausen throws for 347 yards and ND defeats Stanford 28-21 to improve record to 4-1

Dec. 24, 2008
 Notre Dame easily tops Hawaii 49-21 in the Hawaii Bowl. The win is Notre Dame's first in a bowl since a Cotton Bowl victory in 1994

Nov. 7, 2009
 No. 19 ND falls to Navy; first time unranked Navy team has beaten ranked ND team

Feb. 6, 2008
 Weis brings in the country's No. 2 recruiting class, which includes Kyle Rudolph, Michael Floyd and Dayne Crist

Nov. 15, 2008
 Weis takes over for Haywood as offensive coordinator, calls plays through end of season

Nov. 14, 2009
 Golden Tate scores twice in comeback effort, but ND loses 27-22 to No. 8 Pitt

June 13, 2008
 Weis' players average above a 3.0 GPA for the sixth straight semester

Nov. 22, 2008
 Irish lose to Syracuse on Senior Day to cap fall from 5-2 to 6-6

Feb. 4, 2009
 Weis lands another top recruiting class, which includes Manti Te'o, Cierre Wood and Chris Watt

Nov. 28, 2009
 Notre Dame relinquishes double-digit lead, loses 45-38 to Stanford to end 2009 season 6-6. It is the 10th game of the season decided by a touchdown or less

August 2008
 Weis hands offensive coordinator duties to assistant coach Mike Haywood



Dec. 3, 2008
 Amid speculation, Athletic Director Jack Swarbrick announces Weis will keep his job



Nov. 21, 2009
 Irish fall 33-30 in double overtime to Connecticut on Senior Day

Nov. 24, 2007
 Notre Dame defeats Stanford 21-14, concluding worst season in school history with 3-9 record

2008

2009

ND ASSISTANT COACHES

Assistants must secure future in wake of change



Rob Ianello

Recruiting
Coordinator



Corwin Brown

Associate
Head Coach



Jon Tenuta

Defensive
Coordinator



Tony Alford

Running
Backs Coach



Randy Hart

Defensive
Line Coach



Bernie Parmalee

Tight Ends
Coach



Brian Polian

Special Teams
Coordinator



Ron Powlus

Quarterbacks
Coach



Frank Verducci

Offensive Line
Coach

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Writer

Charlie Weis' future at Notre Dame was made quite clear Monday when director of athletics Jack Swarbrick announced his firing, but the 11 assistant coaches on Weis' staff await their destinies while Swarbrick searches for a new head coach.

The odds are few of the 11 will be retained by whomever Swarbrick hires, and as assistant head coach Rob Ianello said in a press conference Monday, the coaching staff will be looking out for themselves while helping the University through this transitional period.

"I have committed to Jack [Swarbrick] to do all that I can to ease this transition for the University and I am going to devote my time and efforts to that," said Ianello, who was given the responsibility for football operations until a new coach is hired. "I think you'd be naive that I wouldn't be reaching out to some

people about my future also."

Ianello said the entire coaching staff will put the players and the University first, but will naturally look out for their families and their futures.

"This coaching staff is a very professional coaching staff, a very committed staff," he said. "They will certainly do the University right through this transition."

Ianello may be able to breathe easily for at least a season. His duties as assistant head coach involved coaching the receivers and, more notably, coordinating recruiting. Over the past five seasons Notre Dame receivers, from Jeff Samardzija to Golden Tate, have enjoyed much success, but Ianello's true value to the next Irish coach will be his recruiting knowledge.

The Irish have landed four straight top-15 recruiting classes, and without Weis as the lead recruiter, Ianello's knowledge of the incoming class will likely lead to him sticking around campus for another season.

If not, Ianello will likely land on his feet somewhere, as he already has coached at Wisconsin, Arizona and Alabama.

Offensive line coach Frank Verducci is the next most likely candidate to be on the Irish sidelines next season. In his one season with the Irish, the offensive line performed noticeably better than in the previous two, and the running game became a legitimate weapon. But if the next head coach chooses to proceed without Verducci, he, like Weis, will likely find a position waiting in the NFL. Verducci coached for Cleveland, Buffalo, Dallas and Cincinnati before coming to Notre Dame.

Player favorite co-defensive coordinator Corwin Brown will present an interesting case to any new head coach. While Brown may be the best motivator on staff, his defensive backs largely underperformed this season. If Brown is kept, it will likely be because of his relationship with many of the returning players.

Though the defensive line looked overmatched at times this

season, it seemed progress had been made through the first several games under first-year line coach Randy Hart. He survived nearly three decades and several coaching changes at Washington before coming to Notre Dame, so while the line did not perform up to expectations, Hart's resumé may earn him another year in South Bend.

Swarbrick's hire will want to mark his start here with his own staff, so it is unlikely many, if any, other assistants will be retained. Defensive graduate assistant Bryant Young could return for another season, as he is a former Irish and NFL star. But his role this season was unclear, and the next hire is most likely not going to have Notre Dame ties, so Young's accomplishments years ago may not hold much weight.

Special teams coordinator Brian Polian should be able to find an NFL position if it comes to that. His father is the president of the Indianapolis Colts, and one of his brothers serves as the vice president of football operations

with the Colts. Polian's younger brother is the assistant to the head coach of the Minnesota Vikings.

Defensive coordinator Jon Tenuta did not find the same success at Notre Dame as he found at Georgia Tech the six seasons prior, but he will likely end up in the same position somewhere else in college football.

Running backs coach Tony Alford has never stayed at the same school for long, but in his past 14 years as running backs coach at various schools he has produced seven 1,000 yard rushers, and he should be given a chance for another next season at yet another school.

The three remaining members of the coaching staff — tight ends coach Bernie Parmalee, quarterbacks coach Ron Powlus and offensive graduate assistant Brian White — will all likely be elsewhere in college football next season as well.

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WEIS' ROAD TO ND

NFL success doesn't translate to college for Weis

By BILL BRINK
Sports Writer

Charlie Weis' affiliation with Notre Dame began long ago, when he was a student in the 1970s. He walked into then-University President Fr. Theodore Hesburgh's office with a complaint about the state of the football team.

In his book, he said he left "feeling as humbled as you could possibly be."

Now Weis leaves Notre Dame again, probably not with the same humbled feeling as he had as a student but possibly with a different perspective on the frustration of losing than he had as an undergraduate.

After graduating Notre Dame in 1978, Weis coached at Boontown High School and Morristown High School in his native New Jersey. In 1985, coach Joe Morrison at South Carolina hired him and he coached there for four seasons. He returned to New Jersey to lead Franklin High School to the state championship in 1989.

That year, Weis made his foray into the NFL, working in the New York Giants' personnel department while coaching Franklin. In 1990, he became a Giants offensive and special teams assistant under Bill Parcells. The Giants won Super Bowl XXV that year, beating the Buffalo

Bills 20-19, and Weis earned his first Super Bowl ring.

In 1991, Weis took over as the Giants' running backs coach and served for two seasons.

Weis then spent four years with the New England Patriots, also under Parcells. He coached the tight ends during his first two seasons in New England. In his third, he coached the running backs, and rookie Curtis Martin set Patriots records with 1,487 rushing yards and 14 touchdowns. In his fourth year, 1996, Weis coached New England's receivers.

From 1997 to 1999, Weis served as the New York Jets offensive coordinator. He coached under Parcells and Bill Belichick, whom he would later coach under in New England. He took the Jets, who went 1-15 in 1995, to a 9-7 record in his first season. In 1998, the Jets finished fourth in the NFL in total offense.

They scored the second-most points in franchise history and won their first-ever division title. The Jets' top receivers, Keyshawn Johnson and Wayne Chrebet, both passed 1,000 yards receiving under Weis, who was also the receivers coach. The Jets hadn't had two 1,000-yard receivers since 1986.

From 2000 to 2004, Weis went back to New England, serving as the Patriots' offensive coordinator under



Then-Patriots offensive coordinator Charlie Weis, left, hugs New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick, center, and then-defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel after the Patriots won Super Bowl XXXIX in Jacksonville.

Belichick. New England won three Super Bowls during his time there and he helped make Tom Brady, the 199th overall pick in the NFL Draft, a top-tier NFL quarterback.

Five years ago yesterday, Notre Dame fired Tyrone Willingham as head coach. Their first choice, Urban Meyer, turned down Notre Dame and accepted the head coaching position at Florida. Meyer has since won two national championships with the Gators. Notre Dame then hired Weis and signed a six-

year contract.

Midway through his first season, Weis signed a new 10-year contract that extended through the 2015 season and was worth anywhere from \$20 to \$30 million depending on reports. Weis compiled a 35-27 record at Notre Dame, won one bowl game and lost two.

Weis had success in his first two seasons at Notre Dame. The Irish almost upset USC at home during Weis' first season, and he led the team to the Fiesta Bowl. The

Irish lost to Ohio State. In his second year, Weis led the team to the Sugar Bowl, but again the Irish lost, this time to LSU.

In his next three years, Weis went 16-21, including a 3-9 debacle in 2007. The Irish went 7-6 in 2008, beating Hawaii in the Hawaii Bowl. This season, the Irish finished 6-6 and lost their last four straight after starting 6-2.

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POTENTIAL REPLACEMENTS

Who will be next in line at Notre Dame?

By MICHAEL BRYAN
Associate Sports Editor

At Monday's press conference, director of athletics Jack Swarbrick announced the search for Charlie Weis' replacement had officially begun.

"This is a job in which there is great interest," Swarbrick said. "It is a job in which people understand the potential that is here to return Notre Dame to a position of prominence in college football, and I'm excited to embark full bore on the process of finding the right next successor to the legacy of Rockne and Leahy and Parseghian and Holtz."

Swarbrick denied reports that he had contacted potential replacements, but he said the search "has effectively begun."

At this point, the discussion of who will succeed Weis is entirely conjecture. But it sure is fun, so with that, here is our list of the top candidates Swarbrick might examine in the hopes of taking the Irish back to glory.

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THE FRONTRUNNERS

BOB STOOPS, OKLAHOMA COACH



Recently finishing his 11th regular season at Oklahoma, Bob Stoops has brought tremendous success back to the Sooner program since leaving his defensive coordinator position at Florida.

Stoops has won six Big 12 championships and one national title in Norman, and has a 110-25 record as Oklahoma's head coach. He has a wealth of experience coaching a top FBS program and had led the Sooners to eight BCS bowls in 11 years.

Despite his success, Stoops has faced recent criticism for his team's failure to show up in big games, losing their last five BCS bowl games. With his proven track record winning at a top program, Stoops figures to be one of if not the top name on Jack Swarbrick's list.

BRIAN KELLY, CINCINNATI COACH



Brian Kelly has become one of the hottest coaches in college football this year, leading Cincinnati to an 11-0 record heading into Saturday's showdown against Pittsburgh.

Recently named one of the finalists for the George Munger Award for the best coach in college football, Kelly has led the Bearcats to a 33-6 record as a head coach. Kelly's spread offense has put up impressive numbers and led Cincinnati to a Big East title and Orange Bowl appearance last year.

Kelly also has experience turning programs around, taking Central Michigan from a three-win team to the MAC Championship and a 9-4 record in just three seasons. If interested in the Notre Dame job, Kelly will not interview or have serious talks with the Irish until after this weekend's game against the Panthers.

SECOND TIER



Gary Patterson
Texas Christian coach

Another coach that has led its team to an undefeated season in 2009, Patterson led TCU to a 12-0 record and a probable BCS berth this season.

The Horned Frogs have finished with 10 or more wins in six of nine seasons under Patterson. Despite battling for local talent against local powerhouses like Texas, Texas Tech and Texas A&M, Patterson has been able to develop elite talent in Fort Worth.

Patterson's defenses have consistently ranked near the top national teams.



Butch Davis
North Carolina coach

After leaving his post as a coordinator for the Cowboys, Davis compiled a 51-20 record at Miami from 1995-2000, helping to return the program to prominence. The Hurricanes compiled an 11-1 record in his final year, and Davis laid the foundation for their 2001 national championship.

A top recruiter, Davis has helped improve a struggling UNC program after struggling in the NFL with the Browns. He has the head coaching experience the Irish are looking for and a history of bringing in top talent.



Chris Petersen
Boise State coach

Since taking over the Boise State program in 2006, Petersen has led the Broncos to a 47-4 record and a BCS win in his four seasons as head coach.

While Petersen has the least head coaching experience of any major candidate, he has a proven track record of success and player development at Boise.

He made his first impact on the national college football scene by leading the Broncos to an undefeated record in his first season, leading the team to a Fiesta Bowl upset of Oklahoma that featured several trick plays.

THIRD TIER



Kirk Ferentz
Iowa coach

Iowa's coach of the last 11 seasons, Ferentz had one of the best years of his career this year, leading the Hawkeyes to a 10-2 record.

Iowa has shared two Big Ten titles under Ferentz, and made a BCS appearance in the Orange Bowl in 2002. Many major college programs and NFL teams have been rumored to have interest in Ferentz at different points in his career, but the coach has elected to stay in Iowa and currently has a contract to remain there until 2015.



Paul Johnson
Georgia Tech coach

A coach the Irish are familiar with facing, Johnson has had rapid success since taking over at Georgia Tech in 2008.

While many doubted that Johnson's triple-option offense would work in a major conference, the Yellow Jackets have compiled a 19-5 record over the past two years and will play for the ACC Championship against Clemson Saturday.

Johnson led Navy to five straight bowl berths and a 45-29 record in six seasons in Annapolis.



Jim Harbaugh
Stanford coach

The last opponent Charlie Weis faced, Harbaugh led Stanford to one of its best seasons in years in 2009, finishing 8-4 and 6-3 in the Pac-10.

In 2007 Harbaugh led Stanford to a huge win over No. 1 USC, upsetting the Trojans 24-23 despite being a 41-point underdog. The Cardinal again beat Pete Carroll and USC this season, defeating the Trojans 55-21 and scoring the most points against USC in program history.

IN SWARBRICK'S DREAMS...



Urban Meyer
Florida coach

The top candidate for the Notre Dame job in 2004, Meyer turned down the Irish for Florida and has turned the Gators into the top program in college football after a successful run at Utah.

A former Notre Dame assistant under Lou Holtz, Meyer led Florida to national championships in 2006 and 2008, and the Gators are currently No. 1 in the BCS Standings and undefeated heading into Saturday's SEC Championship game against No. 2 Alabama.

While Meyer has in the past called Notre Dame a "dream job," he has denied having any interest in leaving Florida and has no good reason to abandon a perennial title contender in Gainesville.

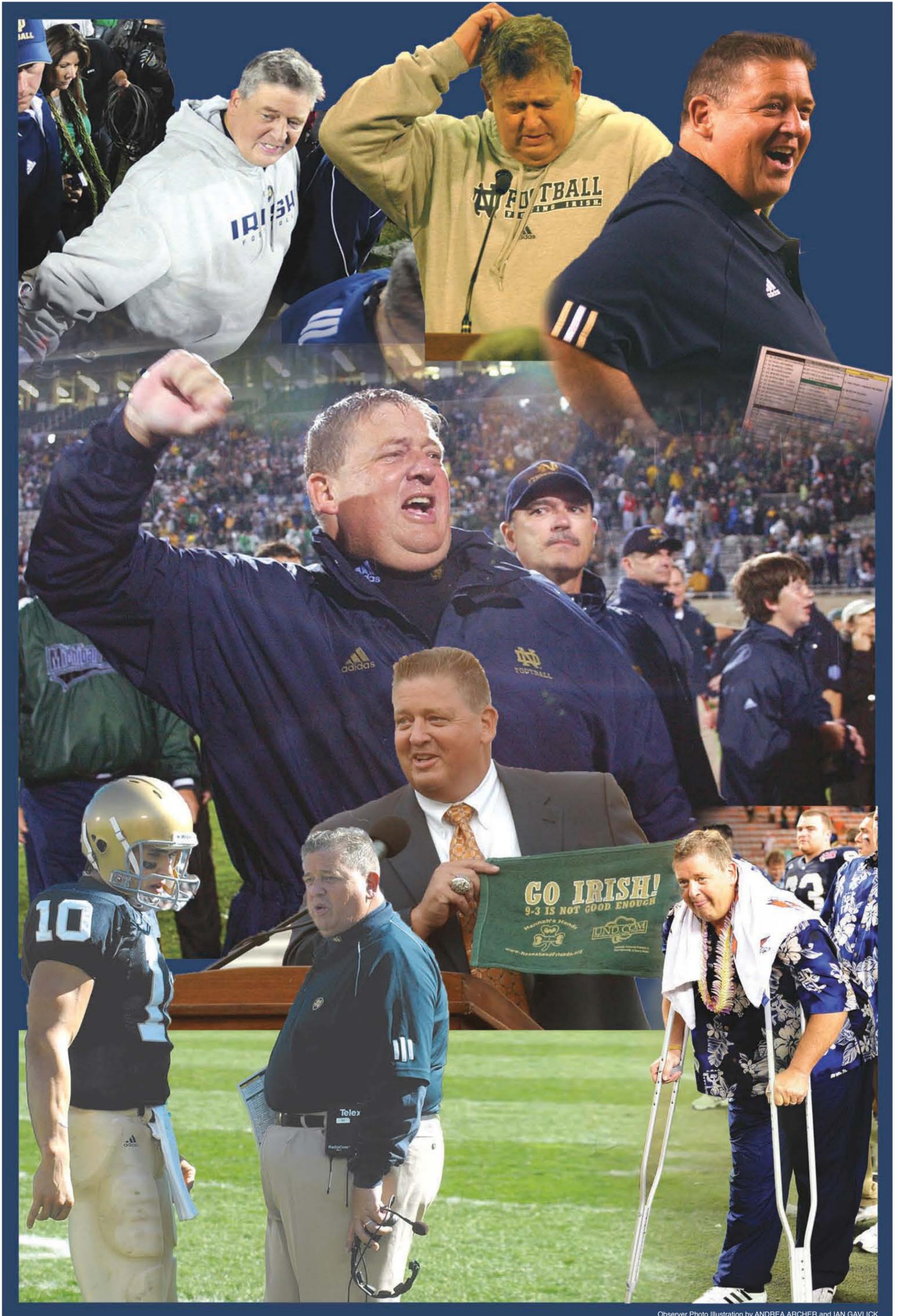


Jon Gruden
ESPN analyst

Another name suspected as a candidate after Willingham's firing, Gruden has family connections to the Notre Dame program, as his father was an assistant under Dan Devine.

Gruden has coached as an assistant at the college level, but gained notoriety at the NFL level as the coach of the Oakland Raiders and Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He led Tampa Bay to a Super Bowl win in 2002 over his former team.

Most recently, Gruden has been an analyst on Monday Night Football and recently signed an extension to remain with the program. It also seems unlikely that Swarbrick and the Irish would want to sign another professional coach who has no head coaching experience at the college level.



Observer Photo Illustration by ANDREA ARCHER and IAN GAVLICK

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THE
OBSERVER

Stanford 45, Notre Dame 38

Deafening silence

Stanford's Gerhart runs for 205 yards as Irish lose fourth straight

By MICHAEL BRYAN
Associate Sports Editor

STANFORD, Calif. — The game followed the template of nearly every game of 2009: outstanding performances by Jimmy Clausen and Golden Tate, an inconsistent defensive effort and a last-second finish. And like the 2009 season as a whole, the final game was a disappointment for the Irish, who fell to the Cardinal 45-38 at Stanford Stadium.

Stanford senior running back Toby Gerhart rushed for 205 yards and three touchdowns, including the game-winner with 59 seconds left as Notre Dame lost its fourth straight game to finish 6-6.

Another late comeback effort by Clausen and Tate fell short, as Notre Dame gave up two sacks on the final drive and Clausen's Hail Mary pass was batted down as time expired.

"It's just the way the year's been," Irish coach Charlie Weis said in a press release. "I feel really bad for the outgoing players. There's a bunch of 22-, 23-year-old young men right there finishing their career losing the last four games. They feel miserable and I feel miserable for them."

Clausen finished with 340 yards and five touchdowns, tying a career high. Tate caught a career-high 10 receptions for 201 yards and three touchdowns.

"It's frustrating, anytime you lose the game we're losing by a touchdown or less," Clausen said. "I'm a real competitive athlete and it's really tough."

After a big stop on Stanford's first offensive possession, the Irish offense had a critical giveaway on their first offensive play. Freshman running back Theo Riddick was stuffed on an inside run and fumbled, which the Cardinal recovered on the Notre Dame 13.

Gerhart ran three straight times on the ensuing possession, refusing to go down on a four-yard touchdown run that put Stanford up 7-0 early.

Notre Dame responded by forcing a turnover of its own, gaining the ball deep in Stanford territory after safety Sergio Brown forced a fumble that was recovered by Braxton Cave. Starting on the Stanford 16, the Irish evened up the score with a five-yard touchdown pass from Clausen to Tate.

A big sack by Brown helped the Irish hold Stanford to a Nate Whitaker field goal on their next possession. They responded with a long drive of their own. After completions to Tate and Robert Hughes, Riddick took a short pass from Clausen 24 yards to the Stanford 18-yard-line for a key



IAN GAVLICK/The Observer

Stanford running back Toby Gerhart throws a touchdown pass on a trick play in the fourth quarter of the Cardinal's 45-38 win over Notre Dame. The Cardinal rushed for 280 total yards in the game.

third-down conversion.

The 10-play drive finished in spectacular fashion, as sophomore Michael Floyd caught a touchdown pass from Clausen on the next play, staying in bounds on one foot and extending over the sideline to make the catch and give Notre Dame its first lead at 14-10.

Stanford took advantage of good starting field position on their next drive, as David Ruffer's kickoff went out of bounds. After several Gerhart runs, the Cardinal were set back by a holding penalty and had to settle for a 47-yard field to cut the lead to 14-13 early in the second quarter.

Notre Dame went back to the running game to ignite its next drive, beginning with three straight runs by Hughes for a total of 24 yards. After two Clausen completions and a quarterback sneak, Hughes broke free for a 15-yard gain on fourth down to extend the drive.

An incompletion and fumbled snap led to Notre Dame settling for a 41-yard field goal from Ruffer, extending the lead back to four points at 17-13.

The defense forced a Stanford punt on their next possession, with

senior defensive end John Ryan making a key tackle for a five-yard loss after several big runs by Gerhart.

The ensuing Irish drive started out moving the wrong direction, with false start and holding penalties on their first two plays. A personal foul call on Stanford finally gave the Irish some breathing room, and on the next play Clausen connected deep with Tate for a 78-yard touchdown.

With the catch Tate broke Jeff Samardzija's school record for career receiving yards (2,593), and gave the Irish a 24-13 lead.

"It was about concentration and being competitive," Tate said. "I knew that could change the game, and if I dropped it I would have been devastated."

The Cardinal retaliated with a touchdown of their own before halftime, with quarterback Andrew Luck completing passes for two big first downs. Fullback Owen Marecic punched it in for the touchdown with just 11 seconds left in the half to make the score 24-20.

The Irish continued moving the ball at will in the second half, gashing the Stanford defense with

runs by Hughes and Tate. Weis then dialed up a trick play out of the Wildcat formation for a 48-yard score, with Hughes receiving the snap and handing off to Tate, who pitched back to Clausen. No Cardinal player was within 20 yards of Floyd, and Clausen hit him for his fourth touchdown pass of the game, giving Notre Dame a 31-20 lead.

Stanford continued to respond to Notre Dame scores, however, turning to its strength and the ground game to respond with a touchdown of its own. Gerhart led an 81-yard drive that was comprised of nine straight runs, and finished the effort with a 10-yard romp into the end zone.

"Our players did a great job," Stanford coach Jim Harbaugh said. "Handling success, facing adversity, rising from adversity. It starts from the seniors, their fire and desire to win has fueled this team."

After the Cardinal defense finally made a stop, the Stanford passing attack began clicking. Luck found Gerhart for a 33-yard gain, and then Chris Owusu for 21 yards one play later. The Irish made stops for losses on two straight Stanford

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player of the game

Toby Gerhart
Stanford running back

Gerhart did it all with 205 yards rushing and 3 touchdowns, 33 yards receiving and an 18-yard TD throw.

stat of the game

943

Total yards of offense combined for Notre Dame (447) and Stanford (496) in a game that was a classic shootout.

play of the game

Toby Gerhart's 18-yard touchdown pass on 4th-and-4 in the fourth quarter

The halfback pass to Ryan Whalen helped the Cardinal tie the game with nine minutes to play.

quote of the game

"It was a microcosm of our season ... It's just the way the year's been."

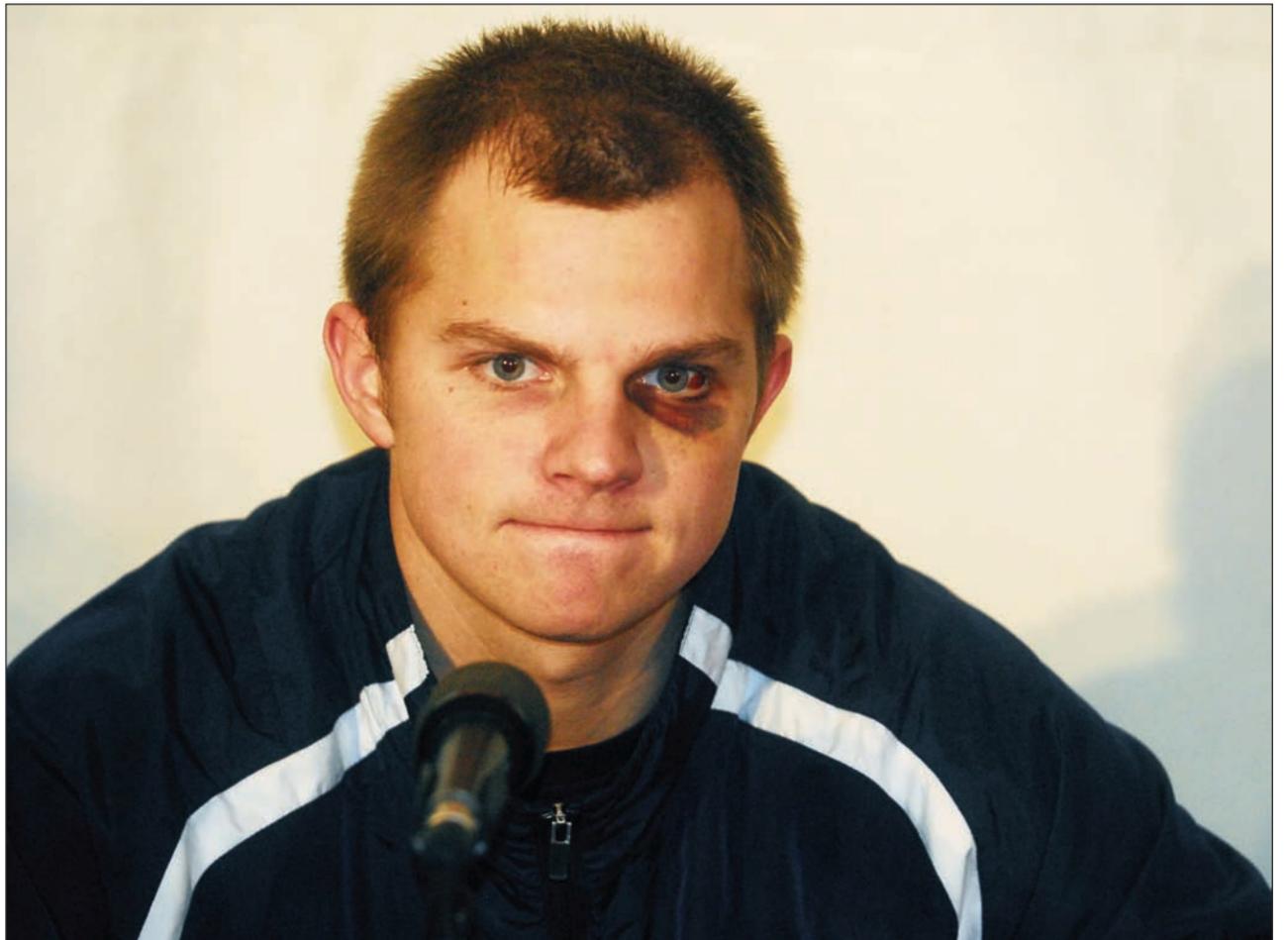
Charlie Weis
Irish coach

report card

- A** **quarterbacks:** Clausen posted gaudy statistics and showed yet again that he can make all the throws, including several tough ones on the run.
- B** **running backs:** Riddick's early fumble led to a Stanford touchdown, but he and Hughes both ran hard and averaged nearly six yards per carry.
- A** **receivers:** Tate and Floyd combined for 286 yards and five touchdowns, including several highlight-reel catches and runs that kept the Irish in the game.
- B** **offensive line:** The line looked good for most of the night but couldn't give a push on a big third-down or allow Clausen time on Notre Dame's last drive.
- C-** **defensive line:** Stanford ran all over the Irish to the tune of 280 yards, and the blame for that falls first with the big boys up front.
- B-** **linebackers:** Te'o and Smith each had five tackles and made some nice plays, but the effort was inconsistent and Gerhart found too many open running lanes.
- B** **defensive backs:** McCarthy and Brown, who also had a sack, led the team in tackles, and considering Stanford's running success, the pass defense was OK.
- A-** **special teams:** Designed pooch kicks gave Stanford good field position, but Ruffer was perfect, Turk was solid and the punt coverage team recovered a fumble that led to the first Irish score.
- C+** **coaching:** Weis dialed up a few nice gadget plays, and the team kept its composure despite a tough start. But the Irish couldn't finish a game yet again, and that continues to fall on the head coach's shoulders.
- 3.04** **overall:** A familiar story for Notre Dame, as the Irish lose a close one in which they led late and showed glimpses of greatness on offense but failed on defense.

adding up the numbers

- 10** Number of Notre Dame games decided in the final minute of regulation or in overtime. The Irish are 4-6 in those games this season.
- 50** Number of consecutive starts made by senior right tackle Sam Young, a Notre Dame record. Young has started every game of his career.
- 16** Number of career touchdown receptions for Michael Floyd after he caught two scoring passes Saturday. Floyd has played in just 18 games.
- 7** Number of 300-yard passing games for Jimmy Clausen this season, a school record. Clausen now has 10 in his career, second in Irish history.
- 25** Number of touchdown drives of 70 yards or more the Irish have executed this season, including four against Stanford.
- 4** Number of Irish freshmen to record at least 60 tackles in a season, now that linebacker Manti Te'o joined that group Saturday.
- 5** Consecutive field goal attempts junior David Ruffer has made since taking over for injured freshman Nick Tausch.
- 8** Number of consecutive games with a receiving touchdown for Golden Tate, who has scored in 11 straight games. He has 18 total touchdowns this season.



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Irish junior quarterback Jimmy Clausen talks with the media following Notre Dame's 45-38 loss at Stanford Saturday. Clausen suffered a black eye in a reported altercation outside of C.J.'s Pub in South Bend early on Nov. 22.

Season ends in disappointment

Isaac Newton never met Charlie Weis, or any Notre Dame football players.

If he did, he'd be in for a shock.

After he got plunked on the head by a falling apple, Newton figured out some laws of motion, the first off which says that everything in motion stays that way unless some outside force acts upon it.

The Irish were 6-2 and had the momentum to cruise to 10-2 and a potential BCS berth, at the very least a New Years' Day bowl game. Four losses later, that momentum has dissipated.

So what outside force acted on the Irish? You could make the argument that Navy's option attack, Dion Lewis, UConn's run game and Toby Gerhart were "outside forces," but the true actor that stopped Notre Dame was itself. They couldn't finish. Newton wouldn't know what to do with such empirical evidence.

Blame who you want, but Weis, as the face of the program, ultimately has to take the blame for the inability to convert talent to success. In the past three seasons, he's gone 3-9, 6-6 and 6-6 after restocking the talent. Especially in light of the way the games this season were won and lost, Weis has not prepared this team to win games.

The Midshipmen started it all, running the same offense they always do and still succeeding, rushing for 348 yards and beating the Irish at home by two. The thread started loosening in the seams after that game when nose tackle Ian Williams said the Irish were out-schemed while safety Kyle McCarthy blamed the playmaking.

Against Pittsburgh, the Irish played

too conservatively. Weis claimed he called the game that way because he was on the road in a hostile environment. Notre Dame mustered three points in the first half but 19 in the fourth quarter, when it was desperately trying to come back. Imagine if the Irish played with that intensity all game.

Notre Dame changed that and got going early against Connecticut, but couldn't keep it up. Nor could it contain Jordan Todman or Andre Dixon, who each rushed for more than 100 yards. Dixon eventually scored in the second overtime to seal the win and Notre Dame lost to a sub-.500 Big East team on Senior Day for the second year in a row.

Which brings us to Stanford, surprisingly Notre Dame's best showing of the final four games. Jimmy Clausen threw for 340 yards and five touchdowns, Golden Tate made a last-second push for the Biletnikoff with 10 catches for 201 yards and three touchdowns and the Irish established the run even without Armando Allen. But no finish. Like every other loss, no finish.

On a fourth-down attempt, the Irish let Toby Gerhart throw a halfback pass to Ryan Whalen to tie the game. Then they allowed a 72-yard drive that took 4:49 and ended with Gerhart's third rushing touchdown of the game with less than one minute left.

Again they showed fight. Clausen completed three passes to Tate on the final drive but couldn't score, and the Irish are 6-6 for the second straight season and have to live with the knowledge that the blame falls on them and the coaches.

With the talent the team has shown, 6-6 is inexcusable and the players and coaches know it. They also know what Newton knows: for every action there's a reaction.

Action: Team goes 6-6. Reaction: Weis was fired. Secondary reaction: the chances of Clausen returning are slim.

"The reason I stepped on this cam-

pus was because of coach Weis," Clausen said after the game. "To be honest, I wouldn't be here right now if it wasn't for him."

I'm no linguistic expert, but the rough translation is: If Weis is gone, I'm gone.

Without Clausen throwing to him, the odds that Tate jumps to the NFL increase as well. Which leaves the Irish as an underperforming squad short a head coach, quarterback and star receiver.

As if the program didn't have enough black eyes already, Clausen got one himself last weekend, and the program responded by banning media access not only to him but the rest of the players and assistant coaches. After the loss to Stanford, where surprisingly enough there was good (Clausen's good game and Tate, who tied or broke several school records) to discuss along with the bad (Weis' job, a potential bowl game, Clausen's shiner), Weis did not speak with the media.

Of all the things the program needs from its leaders, silence isn't one of them.

The off-season, regardless of who is in charge, should be focused on one thing: how to finish. Finish halves, finish games, finish seasons. The talent is there but the assassin's mentality to bury opponents, to kick them when they're down and leave no chance of a comeback, or to come back yourself when all seemed lost, hasn't permeated the program.

Newton probably wouldn't care much for football, but he certainly knew how to finish what he started. The Irish need to channel their frustration with their four-game losing streak to end the season into converting their opportunities in 2010 — no matter who wears the headset, no matter who's under center.

The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer. Contact Bill Brink at wbrink@nd.edu



Bill Brink

Sports Writer

Tune in to the Irish Insider podcast at ndsmcobserver.com/podcasts.

Gerhart makes case for Heisman



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Stanford running back Toby Gerhart runs upfield during Stanford's 45-38 win over Notre Dame Saturday night. Gerhart finished with 205 yards rushing and three touchdowns.

By MICHAEL BRYAN
Associate Sports Editor

STANFORD, Calif. — On his final play of the game, the Irish defense let Toby Gerhart into the end zone in the hopes of getting the ball back with a chance to force overtime. Most of the game, though, Gerhart had his way with the Notre Dame defenders even when they were going all out to stop him.

The Stanford running back rumbled for 205 yards and three touchdowns, including the game-winner, and even passed for a score on a crucial fourth-and-four play. While senior captain Kyle McCarthy said the Irish's game plan was to focus on stopping the run, the Notre Dame defense was gashed repeatedly by the 235-pound Gerhart.

With the monstrous game against the Irish, Gerhart became the leading rusher in all of FBS, finishing the regular season with 1,736 yards. Gerhart's 26 touch-

downs also lead all running backs, and the senior averaged 5.6 yards per carry.

Gerhart's second touchdown against Notre Dame put him into the record books, as he broke the Pac-10 single-season record for touchdowns in a season set by LenDale White in 2005 and Corey Dillon in 1996.

"Toby has said it all with the way he's played," Stanford coach Jim Harbaugh said. "He hasn't talked about it, just gone out there week after week."

Gerhart's first touchdown came less than four minutes into the game. Following a Theo Riddick fumble, Gerhart ran the ball three straight times for the Cardinal, breaking a tackle and using a hand to stay balanced and get two extra yards before diving into the end zone.

"He's a phenomenal player, one of the best I've ever been around," Harbaugh said.

Every time it seemed Notre Dame might have a chance to pull away, Gerhart and the Cardinal offense would put together a long scoring drive to stay within a score. The senior's 10-yard touchdown run in the third quarter, his second of the day, narrowed the Irish lead to 31-27.

"He's a big physical runner," Irish coach Charlie Weis said in a press release. "Everyone thinks he just runs north-south, but they run him to the edge a lot on a toss or a toss-sweep. When he gets to the edge, you're in trouble."

With Stanford finally driving with a chance to even up the game, Gerhart showed off his throwing

ability in the fourth quarter. On a fourth-and-four play from the Notre Dame 18-yard-line, Gerhart took the pitch from quarterback Andrew Luck and completed a touchdown to wide receiver Ryan Whalen.

"We practice that once a week, I just threw up a prayer," Gerhart said. "In practice [Whalen] is always wide open and in the game his back was turned and I just threw it out there and he made a great play."

With his strong performances throughout the season and role in big wins over marquee opponents USC and Notre Dame, Gerhart seems to have played himself into the Heisman discussion.

"Toby is too humble to say anything about himself, but how can you not at least invite him," Luck said. "He put his team on his back. He makes everyone in the locker room a better player. I think he deserves it."

Contact Michael Bryan at mbryan@nd.edu

"Toby [Gerhart] has said it all with the way he's played."

Jim Harbaugh
Stanford head coach

Notes: Tate breaks career record in loss

By BILL BRINK
Sports Writer

STANFORD, Calif. — Irish receiver Golden Tate broke Jeff Samardzija's school record for career receiving yards. Tate's 201 yards in the game put him at 2,707 career receiving yards, passing Samardzija's record of 2,593. Tate also tied Samardzija's record of eight consecutive games with a receiving touchdown, which Samardzija set in 2005. Tate now has had a touchdown of any kind in 11 consecutive games.

Tate also extended his streak of games with 100 yards or more to 15 overall and nine this season. His

season total broke Tom Gatewood's record of eight, which Gatewood set in 1970.

Tate tied a single-season touchdown record with 15 receiving touchdowns. Samardzija had 15 in 2005 and Rhema McKnight had 15 in 2006. Finally, Tate scored his 18th overall touchdown, which tied Allen Pinkett for second on the all-time list. Pinkett had 18 in 1984. Jerome Bettis set the single-season record with 20 in 1991.

Tate said he didn't know he had broken the records after the game.

"It's great to be mentioned with those guys but right now I'm really hurting," he said. "Maybe in a week or a year ... it'll hit me."

Quick off the blocks

In Notre Dame's last three games, all losses, the Irish scored an average of eight points in the first half and 3.3 points in the first quarter. Against Stanford, they scored 14 points in the first quarter and 10 in the second. The 14 points in the first quarter were the most the Irish scored in the first period this season.

Tackling leaders

With his 10 tackles, freshman linebacker Manti Te'o finished with 63 on the season, making him one of four Irish freshmen to record more than 60 tackles in a season.

Senior safety Kyle McCarthy, already the only Notre Dame defensive back to record 100 tackles in a season with 110 in

2008, did so again this year. His team-leading 11 tackles gave him 101 in the season.

So close ...

Ten of Notre Dame's 12 games have been decided during the final minute of the game or in overtime.

"To be honest with you, we didn't finish," Irish quarterback Jimmy Clausen said. "It's frustrating. It seems that every time we lose a game it's by a touchdown or less."

He's right: Notre Dame's largest margin of defeat has been seven points, during Saturday's 45-38 loss to Stanford and a 34-27 loss to USC on Oct. 17.

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scoring summary

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Total
Notre Dame	14	10	7	7	38
Stanford	10	10	7	18	45

First quarter

Stanford 7, Notre Dame 0
Toby Gerhart 4-yd run (Nate Whitaker kick) with 11:34 remaining.
Drive: 3 plays, 13 yards, 1:30 elapsed.

Stanford 7, Notre Dame 7
Golden Tate 5-yd pass from Jimmy Clausen (David Ruffer kick) with 8:56 remaining.
Drive: 4 plays, 16 yards, 1:18 elapsed.

Stanford 10, Notre Dame 7
Whitaker 40-yd field goal with 5:59 remaining.
Drive: 7 plays, 38 yards, 2:52 elapsed.

Notre Dame 14, Stanford 10
Michael Floyd 18-yd pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with :40 remaining.
Drive: 10 plays, 78 yards, 5:12 elapsed.

Second quarter

Notre Dame 14, Stanford 13
Whitaker 47-yd field goal with 12:39 remaining.
Drive: 8 plays, 30 yards, 3:01 elapsed.

Notre Dame 17, Stanford 13
Ruffer 42-yd field goal with 7:25 remaining.
Drive: 11 plays, 53 yards, 5:08 elapsed.

Notre Dame 24, Stanford 13
Tate 78-yd pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 4:23 remaining.
Drive: 3 plays, 88 yards, :48 elapsed.

Notre Dame 24, Stanford 20
Owen Marecic 1-yd run (Whitaker kick) with :11 remaining.
Drive: 9 plays, 61 yards, 4:07 elapsed.

Third quarter

Notre Dame 31, Stanford 20
Floyd 46-yd pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 12:56 remaining.
Drive: 4 plays, 76 yards, 1:58 remaining.

Notre Dame 31, Stanford 27
Gerhart 10-yd run (Whitaker kick) with 8:12 remaining.
Drive: 9 plays, 81 yards, 4:42 remaining.

Fourth quarter

Notre Dame 31, Stanford 30
Whitaker 29-yd field goal with 14:57 remaining.
Drive: 12 plays, 76 yards, 6:01 elapsed.

Notre Dame 38, Stanford 30
Tate 28-yd pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 12:56 remaining.
Drive: 4 plays, 80 yards, 2:01 elapsed.

Notre Dame 38, Stanford 38
Ryan Whalen 18-yd pass from Gerhart (Jim Dray pass from Andrew Luck) with 8:59 remaining.
Drive: 7 plays, 67 yards, 3:50 elapsed.

Stanford 45, Notre Dame 38
Gerhart 4-yd run (Whitaker kick) with :59 remaining.
Drive: 10 plays, 72 yards, 4:49 elapsed.

statistics

total yards

ND	447
Stan	496

rushing yards

ND	107
Stan	280

passing yards

ND	340
Stan	216

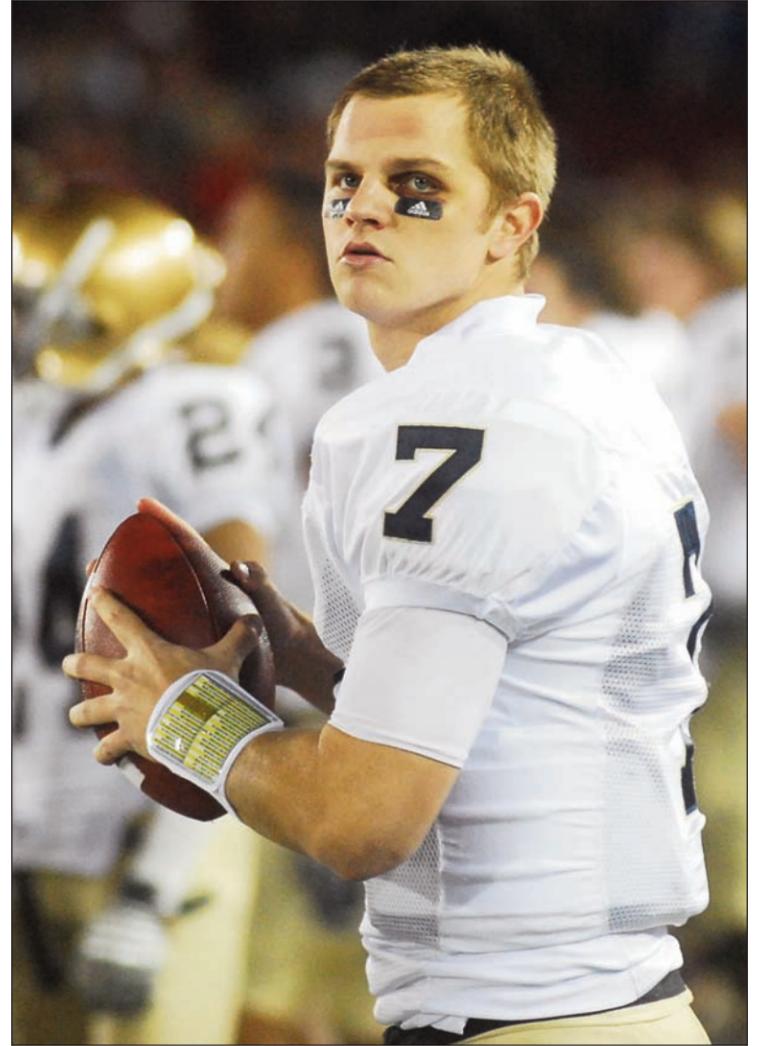
time of possession

ND	24:44
Stan	35:16

passing			
Clausen	25-30-340	Luck	14-20-198
rushing			
Hughes Riddick	13-77	Gerhart Taylor	29-205
	6-37		12-35
receiving			
Tate Floyd	10-201	Whalen Fleener	6-75
	6-85		4-56



IAN GAVLICK/The Observer



JENN METZ/The Observer

Out with a whimper

Jimmy Clausen threw for 340 yards and five touchdowns and Golden Tate caught 10 passes for 201 yards and three scores, but the Irish defense couldn't slow Stanford's Toby Gerhart, as the Cardinal prevailed 45-38. Notre Dame held a 24-20 halftime lead and extended its advantage to 31-20 after its first drive of the second half ended with Michael Floyd's second touchdown catch, but from there, Gerhart would run for two more touchdowns (after scoring one in the first half) and throw for one as well, as the Heisman hopeful rushed for 205 yards. Tate's third touchdown grab — a 28-yarder in which he caught a short pass to the left and cut across the entire defense for a highlight-reel run — gave Notre Dame its final points with 12:56 to play, as the Irish led 38-30. But Gerhart's touchdown pass and his third scoring run with a minute remaining cemented the game, as Clausen's final Hail Mary try would fall incomplete as time expired.

For more photos, check out the photo gallery at ndsmcobserver.com



IAN GAVLICK/The Observer



AARON STEINER/The Observer



DAN JACOBS/The Observer

Clockwise from top: Junior wide receiver Golden Tate steps in the end zone for Notre Dame's first touchdown, junior quarterback Jimmy Clausen warms up on the sidelines, junior line-backer Harrison Smith tries to make a tackle, Tate reacts after an incomplete pass, sophomore wide receiver Michael Floyd hauls in a touchdown pass from Clausen on a trick play.