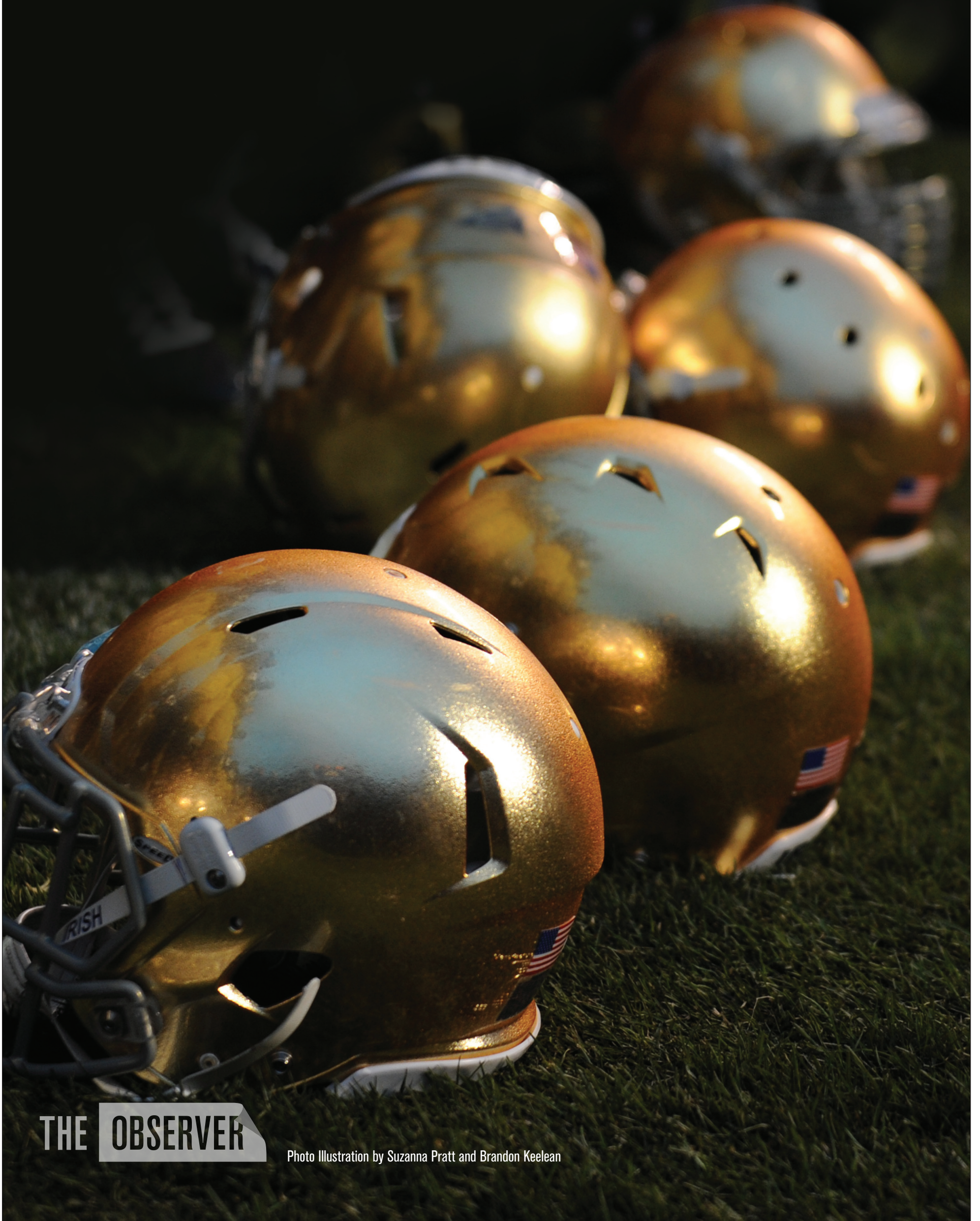


# IRISH INSIDER

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2012

SENIOR DAY EDITION



THE OBSERVER

Photo Illustration by Suzanna Pratt and Brandon Keelean



## COMMENTARY

# This Notre Dame stands together



**Allan Joseph**  
Editor-in-Chief

I'm a naturally garrulous person, so this is astonishingly rare: I have no words to describe this senior class.

No words, that is, except one: "We."

It's a simple, short word that gets used every day. But it's a word that rarely gets used so authentically as with this senior class, this football program and this University.

Only here, and especially with this class, do we say "we" with the football team and mean it.

Why else would we storm the field after Stanford? Why were the cheers after beating Michigan so cathartic?

Forty-eight games ago, this senior class took Notre Dame Stadium for the first time against Nevada. The sun was shining, the hope had sprung anew and the chants of "Beat Wolfpack!" were so clear they reverberate in our memories even today. That 35-0 victory to open the season was the

unfinished business, they said. More importantly, they said they love Notre Dame. We do too — so we heard whispers of hope, but our doubts were shouting: Three straight heartbreaking losses to Michigan. Three straight mediocre seasons. And the hardest schedule in the country awaited.

Now? To accomplish this? The journey, long and arduous as it has been, has brought us to the cusp of the best Notre Dame football season since the legendary 1988 squad — the Lou Holtz-coached, national title-winning Irish forever etched in this program's lore.

We were all years away from being born when that happened. We've never seen this before.

But for three years, we did see our classmates beside us in class. We saw them in the dining hall and in the dorms. And in those three years, we felt only that the football team was a part of us.

It's not that there's a special bond between the team and

**Only at this University could we have this senior season. Because of this football team, we have "we." What other words do we need?**

high point of 2009, and by the time we took our first set of finals, the man who had brought the football players among us to campus was gone.

Slowly, we grew. There were fits and starts: a big win at Boston College preceded consecutive ugly losses to Navy and Tulsa, which were of course followed by a long-awaited win over USC and a Sun Bowl romp over Miami. In the process, some transferred. Many more graduated.

Then what seemed like it could be our year — a healthy quarterback, an explosive offense and a scheduled night game against USC — got off to a stormy start against South Florida. That agonizing, drawn-out, heartbreaking day portended the rest of the 2011 season — and only got worse the next week in the Big House.

After the USC loss, Irish coach Brian Kelly got into some trouble by commenting on the players whom he didn't bring here. It looked like two of the best talents on the roster were heading off to the NFL, and the quarterback position was up in the air again.

But Manti Te'o and Tyler Eifert came back. They had

the student body. It's that the team is simply a part of the student body.

Only at this University, and especially with this class, would the emotional leader of the football player both be a Heisman candidate and a guy who loved dorm life in Dillon Hall. Manti Te'o isn't just the best representation of the football team, he's the best representation of our student body: passionate, successful and driven — but with a heart for people above all.

Only at this University, and especially with this class, is it unthinkable to say "they won" after a game. It's always "we won." It's always about us as a University — it's easy to stay for the Alma Mater after a triple-overtime win to stay undefeated, but the student section was just as full at the end of the 2010 blowout loss to Stanford as it was two weeks ago.

Only at this University could we have this senior season. Because of this football team, we have "we." What other words do we need?

Contact Allan Joseph at [ajoseph2@nd.edu](mailto:ajoseph2@nd.edu)

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

## RECRUITING

# 10-0 start endears Irish to elite recruits nationally

By **CHRIS ALLEN**  
Sports Editor

With the Irish just two games from an undefeated regular season — a position few could have imagined at the beginning of the season — Notre Dame has found itself quickly back among the recruiting elite in the country. With a class of 22 recruits set to come to campus for the 2013 season ranked No. 4 in the country by ESPN, the Irish are set to restock talent following the departure of their current seniors. The Irish have begun to attract talent from top recruits who were not considered targets a few weeks ago, including No. 1 wide receiver Laquon Treadwell. Irish recruiting expert Mike Frank said the rise of the 2012 Irish has already begun to impact recruiting.

"I believe you're already starting to see the success affect this current class," said Frank, who runs the ESPN-affiliated Irish Sports Daily. "There are a couple of guys who are elite guys who I believe they wouldn't be interested in Notre Dame if they were going to go 8-4. You look at a guy like Treadwell; he wouldn't be looking at Notre Dame if they were 8-4."

"[Safety] Max Redfield is another guy who probably wouldn't be so interested in Notre Dame if they weren't having this kind of season."

Frank said he believes Irish coach Brian Kelly has begun to build a dominant program

around an identity formed through recruiting.

"You look at elite programs, what sets them apart is the depth. If you have a guy go down due to injury, usually you can have a guy step in and there won't be too big of a drop-off," Frank said. "The big thing that a lot of guys who don't succeed as coaches don't have is the consistency is recruiting. You can't have one good class followed up by two bad ones. You need to have good classes every year. You also need to hit your numbers at each position in each class, or else you'll be thin down the line."

"One thing [Notre Dame Director of Athletics] Jack Swarbrick said in an interview about Kelly was that he wasn't interested in a guy who recruited the best or talked the best necessarily, but a person who can build the best program. Kelly did that at Grand Valley State, at Central Michigan and at Cincinnati. Now he's starting to do that here through recruiting."

With the imminent departures of a talented class of seniors to the NFL and other postgraduate opportunities, the Irish are set to welcome a group of six early-enrollee players from the current recruiting class. Quarterback Malik Zaire, wide receivers James Onwualu and Corey Robinson, tight end Mike Heurman, offensive tackle Steve Elmer and line-backer Alex Anzalone will begin taking classes and working

out with the football team in the upcoming spring semester. The opportunity to enroll early is generally seen as an advantage for recruits looking to make an early impact, and Frank said Elmer is one player who may benefit the most from the chance.

"You look at offensive tackle, that's a need area. [Junior] Tate Nichols, you look at his situation and it's kind of up in the air. Nobody really knows if Jordan Prestwood is going to return, so a guy like Elmer has some opportunities," Frank said. "I don't necessarily think he is going to start, but he could work his way onto the field early."

With a star-studded group of seniors including All-Americans Manti Te'o and Tyler Eifert set to play its final game at Notre Dame Stadium, Frank said the recruiting class of 2009 was destined to be a special one.

"I knew this was going to be a good class," he said. "But I don't necessarily think I would say I knew they were going to be in a position where as seniors they would be knocking on the door of a BCS championship."

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out Mike Frank's [irishsportsdaily.com](http://irishsportsdaily.com) Email Mike at [mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net) and tell him *The Observer* sent you.

Contact Chris Allen at [callen10@nd.edu](mailto:callen10@nd.edu)

## BCS OUTLOOK THE ROAD TO MIAMI



### NO. 1 KANSAS STATE (10-0)

Last Week: 23-10 win over TCU

Remaining games: at Baylor, No. 15 Texas



### NO. 2 OREGON (10-0)

Last Week: 59-17 win over California

Remaining games: No. 14 Stanford, at No. 11 Oregon State, Pac-12 Championship



## NO. 3 NOTRE DAME



### NO. 4 ALABAMA (9-1)

Last Week: 29-24 loss to Texas A&M

Remaining games: Western Carolina, Auburn, SEC Championship



### NO. 5 GEORGIA (9-1)

Last week: 38-0 win over Auburn

Remaining games: Georgia Southern, Georgia Tech, SEC Championship



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NO. 38  
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## Jake Golic

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TIGHT END  
WEST HARTFORD, CONN.

## 9 Dan Fox

NO. 48  
LINEBACKER  
ROCKY RIVER, OHIO

## 10 Mike Golic, Jr.

NO. 57  
OFFENSIVE GUARD  
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## 2012 SENIOR CLASS

48 GAMES • 32 WINS • 45 TOUCHDOWNS SCORED • 4,147 RECEIVING YARDS • 3,281 RUSHING YARDS • 1,150 TACKLES • 33.5 TACKLES FOR A LOSS • 28 SACKS • 10 INTERCEPTIONS



BLAKE BRESLAU | S | SAN DIEGO

# Breslau makes mark as student first, then athlete

By **PETER STEINER**  
Sports Writer

Every NCAA football player is called to be a “student-athlete.” However, not every player embodies this term as well as senior Blake Breslau—a Science-Business major whose priorities accurately reflect the order of the words “student” and “athlete.”

“I think [the term student-athlete] definitely applies to me in particular, being Science-Business,” Breslau said. “It’s not an easy major. It’s very hard with a lot of chemistry and science-based classes so the student definitely comes before athlete in my case. Being a student has definitely been a real priority.”

But the term doesn’t just illustrate the San Diego native’s dedication as a student. The order of the two words also reflects the chronology of his time at Notre Dame.

Breslau spent his first two years in South Bend exclusively as a student before trying out for the football team in the spring of his sophomore year. After being invited to return for summer football camp, Breslau knew he had found his place at Notre Dame as both a student and an

athlete.

However, Breslau’s two lives were never separated as he continued to learn a variety of lessons while on the football field.

“[Football] has played a big role in my life,” Breslau said. “It’s taught me a lot of good values that I can take off the field—discipline, responsibility and accountability—and just apply to school and anything else.”

The former Keough Hall resident attributes this work ethic displayed on and off the field to someone who has always been in his life: his father.

“My dad is always pushed me to strive in both school and athletics, keep trying, doing your best every day,” Breslau said.

As a member of the team for the last two years, Breslau has added an unrivaled set of experiences to his time at Notre Dame.

“It’s been a great time and I’ve created some good relationships with the guys,” Breslau said. “It’s been a really special year.

“The best experience so far has been the Stanford game this year. Being able to share that with the students rushing the field I thought was a really special experience.”

While the victory over Stanford

in October and the Champs Sports Bowl Game highlight Breslau’s football experience, he said the community he shares with his teammates, particularly the other walk-ons, has been the most rewarding aspect of playing for Notre Dame.

“I think [the Walk On Players Union] has been a really good support system,” Breslau said. “We all stick together and we just have a blast with it. It keeps us motivated to keep working hard and keep playing hard for practice and hopefully some of us can get on the field once and a while.”

This camaraderie Breslau has with his teammates also extends past football, as his friendships off the field define his favorite times at Notre Dame.

“My best memories are just being with my friends, hanging out with my friends and just the friendships I’ve made,” Breslau said. “Those times just hanging around, just talking, just having a good time are the best.”

In fact, this strong community is the realization of what the senior sought even before he stepped foot on campus at Notre Dame. Four years ago, Breslau recognized Notre Dame held exactly what he was looking for in



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior safety Blake Breslau, pictured above in Notre Dame’s 17-14 win on Oct. 20 against BYU, walked on in the spring of his sophomore year.

college—a welcoming, friendly environment.

“I just really liked the community atmosphere [at Notre Dame],” Breslau said. “It was a good community and I really liked some of the professors that I was able to talk with on my visit. I just thought it was a really good, friendly place to spend four years.”

On Senior Day, Breslau is looking forward to sharing this place he has found with two visitors.

“My parents will be here so that will be special,” Breslau said. “That will be the most memorable part [of my last game].”

Ultimately, Breslau will not just show his parents what Notre Dame means to him. He will prove to himself that at Notre Dame, he has found the perfect combination of academics, athletics and community.

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JORDAN COWART | LS | PLANTATION, FLA.

# Cowart eyes NFL career as long snapper

By **AARON SANT-MILLER**  
Sports Writer

Many of Notre Dame’s athletes claim the title of “master of their craft,” but few more so than senior long snapper Jordan Cowart. Cowart is in his final season as the first scholarship long snapper in Irish history.

For Cowart, a lot of this skill comes from his knowledge of the game and his position.

“I know a lot of snappers that are just backup guys thrown in there,” Cowart said. “I’ve gone around the country doing different camps and different combines, so I would say I have a pretty good knowledge of technique. I haven’t really received any new

coaching or anything. I’ve more been self-coached along the way. I have the ability to watch film and see what I’m doing wrong. I think that really helps.”

Yet the position is not entirely based on technique and physical skill, Cowart said. The intangible elements of his game are incredibly important to his success as well.

“All you do is reps of the same thing over again,” Cowart said. “It’s similar to kickers, so when you mess up, you know you can physically make the kick. It’s just a mental thing with snapping. You realize that all eyes are on you and everyone is expecting you to be perfect every single time, which adds pressure.

“You’re human, so you have that mental element in there in the back of your head all the time.”

Luckily for the Irish, the team has been able to depend on Cowart to remain cool under pressure since his freshman year. For Notre Dame’s long snapper, much of this has to do with the familiarity he has with the Irish punter and holder Ben Turk.

Turk and Cowart both graduated in 2009 from Saint Thomas Aquinas High School in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Both players have gone on to have solid careers for the Irish, which includes zero blocked punts, a trend that started for the pair in high school.

“We haven’t gotten a punt blocked in our entire college career and I don’t think we had any in high school either,” Cowart said. “We are such close friends too. We live together and know what gets each other calm. We just have a connection going on and it’s definitely beneficial.”

Yet, things have not all been smooth sailing for Plantation, Fla., native. This year, against Stanford, the Irish failed to connect on a snap for a 44-yard field goal attempt in the second quarter. In a game where every point was critical, the Irish snapper said he experienced what he titled his worst moment in his Notre Dame career.

“That’s the only time I’ve really messed up bad like that and I think that really kind of got to

me,” Cowart said. “I know I come off as a laid back guy, but I pride myself in my personal skill. I was just really upset that I allowed that to happen.”

Despite playing a position of relative anonymity, Cowart will not graduate from Notre Dame without ever being thrust to the front stage. Last season at Purdue, following a punt, he got into a scuffle with Purdue linebacker Chris Carlino, ending up on top of the Boilermaker and throwing a few punches. Cowart’s behavior not only earned him a flag for unnecessary roughness, but also left him walking away with a broken hand, causing him to miss four games of the 2011 season.

“I’ve never been in a fight in my life,” Cowart said. “You can ask the guys on the team, I’m not a very aggressive guy. That’s why I’m a long snapper and not a linebacker.

“I’m not really aggressive and I don’t want to hit people. Something happened, I must have been stressed out from school, football and all that kind of stuff. I just snapped. I don’t even remember it happening. I kind of just ran off to the sideline and did my thing. We were all just amped up on adrenaline and I didn’t even realize until five minutes later when I went to go pick my helmet up that there is something wrong with my hand.”

Yet, for Cowart, he was able to find strength and support from his teammates. As a special teams

player, it’s easy to get a reputation for being “soft,” Cowart said, so the fight earned him respect from teammates.

“My teammates were really cool about it,” Cowart said. “They were proud I stood up for myself and didn’t just get pushed around. They were saying how they knew I was tough now. They were proud of me. It would have been a different thing if it really affected the game or if we didn’t have someone to fill in my spot. Specialists kind of get joked about, so they liked it that I showed I was tough and stood up for myself.”

Despite toying with the idea of attending law school, the sociology major said he is leaning more and more toward a professional career on the field. Currently, ESPN and various other media outlets project Cowart to be one of the top long snapper prospects in this year’s NFL draft.

“I think the best decision for me would be to keep pursuing football,” Cowart said. “It’s what I’m best at and what suits my life best. I’ve been having a good career and have been getting my name out there. I have the opportunity put out in front of me so I might as well take it. I don’t want to look at it and say, ‘Wow, I could have played in the NFL and never tried to.’ I would just be happy with the opportunity.”

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SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior long snapper Jordan Cowart looks on against BYU on Oct. 20. Cowart has played in 42 games throughout his Notre Dame career.



CARLO CALABRESE | LB | VERONA, N.J.

# Calabrese adds physical presence to defense

*Middle linebacker uses breakout sophomore season to earn spot in linebacker rotation*



ASHLEY DACY | The Observer

**Senior linebacker Carlo Calabrese moves down the field in Notre Dame's 30-13 win over No. 8 Oklahoma in Norman, Okla. Calabrese has 136 tackles in his collegiate career.**

By **KATIE HEIT**  
Sports Writer

In an Irish linebacking corps crowded with talent, senior inside linebacker Carlo Calabrese is a force to be reckoned with all on his own. With 136 career tackles and counting, Calabrese has served as a constant presence on defense for the last three years.

The New Jersey native, who clocks in at 6-foot-1 and 245 pounds, was ranked the 12th-best inside linebacker by ESPN as a high school senior. He played quarterback and receiver during high school in addition to his role on defense — he caught 27 passes for 488 yards

and totaled 131 tackles his senior year alone. While he was heavily recruited by Boston College and Rutgers, Calabrese said the choice to come to Notre Dame was an easy one.

"This school has great tradition," Calabrese said. "I visited a lot of schools and one of the biggest things that persuaded me to come here was just being here and seeing this atmosphere. No other school made like this and made me feel at home and that was a big part of the decision."

Calabrese, who lived in Siegfried Hall as an underclassman, said he's never regretted his decision to attend Notre Dame. He said he lines

up each week eager to satisfy the expectations of the Irish fans.

"My favorite part is playing in front of all the fans and putting on a great show for them," he said. "I just love when fans are happy."

Calabrese preserved a year of eligibility his freshman year under former Irish coach Charlie Weis and said despite not playing, he still felt a rush when he ran out on the field.

"My first year, it was great, just running out on the field," Calabrese said. "Knowing you play for such a great team."

With the transition from Weis to current Irish coach Brian Kelly at the end of the

2009 season, Calabrese said the support of the assistant coaches made the coaching change easier.

"It was a big change but these coaches here recruited me, so I knew them," Calabrese said. "It was hard, but at the same time it wasn't."

As a sophomore, Calabrese got his chance to take the field for the first time. He played in 11 games, missing two because of a hamstring injury. With 60 tackles that season, he was an immediate force on defense. He had a career-high 10 tackles during his second collegiate appearance against Michigan on Sept. 11, 2010, though the Irish lost that contest 28-24.

Calabrese said his high point of the dominant sophomore season was finally getting the opportunity to play.

"Sophomore year was the year I was actually going to be running out on the field," Calabrese said. "The best part was knowing you're going to start and play for that team."

Against Boston College on Oct. 10, 2010, Calabrese recorded a career high of 3.5 tackles for a loss, the best single-game performance by a Notre Dame player during the 2010 season.

During the 2011 season, Calabrese played in all 13 games as a reserve linebacker. He recorded 37 tackles, 15 of them individual, and tied his season high of five tackles during contests against Pittsburgh, Maryland, Air Force and South Florida.

So far as a senior, Calabrese has returned as a dominant presence on defense. With at least two more contests remaining, the senior has 39 tackles. His season high came

in his first game of the season against Purdue, where he had a hand in seven tackles.

Calabrese said the highlight of his senior year was the 30-13 victory over Oklahoma on Oct. 27. Calabrese had five tackles against Oklahoma, including an assisted tackle for a loss of one yard.

"Being in their stadium and beating them there was incredible," Calabrese said. "It was a great game. We were both high-ranked teams and it was a battle."

Calabrese said throughout his time at Notre Dame, team unity was never something he had to worry about.

"There's good camaraderie with our whole team," Calabrese said. "We've got great team bonding. We're all friends, we all know each other and we're always together. It's a great team."

Calabrese said Kelly and the rest of the coaches have been a huge influence on his time at Notre Dame, especially defensive coordinator Bob Diaco.

"It's great playing for Kelly," Calabrese said. "He teaches us a lot each week, and Coach Diaco teaches us things we're going to remember the rest of our lives, not only in football. It's great playing for them both."

With the attention of both coaches, Calabrese said he believes he has made major improvements to his game throughout his time with the Irish.

"I think I'm getting better and better each year," Calabrese said. "I'm getting wiser and learning the game more."

Kelly said he believed Calabrese has improved against the passing game even within his senior season.

"There's more confidence," Kelly said after Notre Dame's 29-26 triple-overtime victory over Pittsburgh on Nov. 11. "But I think Carlo has definitely closed the gap there in terms of his development this year in the passing game."

Though he will graduate with a degree in industrial design in the spring, Calabrese's time with the Irish will not end. Calabrese hopes to return to Notre Dame next year as a graduate student in order to utilize his fourth and final year of eligibility.

"I'm not sure what I'm going to do," Calabrese said. "I've got to see what options I have when I graduate and see my advisers and go from there."

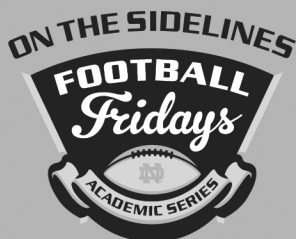
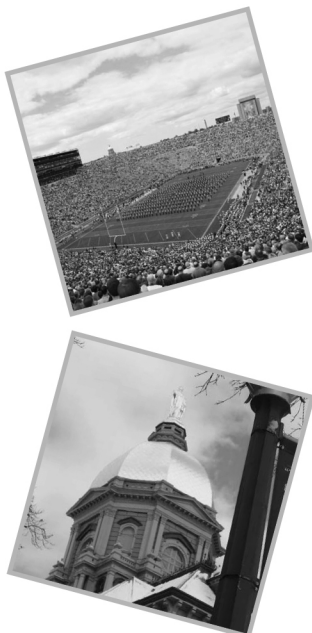
Though he's not certain yet what post-graduate degree he will pursue, he said he hopes his time with the Irish will continue for a final year.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

## STORIES OF NOTRE DAME ON THE SIDELINES WITH JIM LANGFORD

Join us to hear Jim Langford talk about his Notre Dame books, including *Spirit of Notre Dame* and *Quotable Notre Dame*, and his experience as a member of the Notre Dame faculty, to help our understanding of the lure and lore of Notre Dame.

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Contact **Katie Heit** at  
[kheit@nd.edu](mailto:kheit@nd.edu)



BRAXSTON CAVE | C | GRANGER, IND.

# Cave becomes mainstay on offensive line

*Graduate student center stays close to home with decision to play at Notre Dame*

By **MATTHEW ROBISON**  
Sports Writer

For most high school football players, the recruiting process is full of difficult decisions. For senior center Braxton Cave, the decision was a no-brainer.

"My entire family's all about Notre Dame and always have been," Cave said. "When I got the offer it was a pretty easy decision."

Cave grew up in the proverbial shadow of the golden dome in nearby Granger, Ind. He was a standout center at Penn High School and ranked as one of the best offensive linemen in the country.

As a school that recruits nationally, Notre Dame's players come from all over the country. But Cave has the unique opportunity to play in front of his hometown crowd every time the Irish play a home game.

"It's fun knowing a lot of people around town, having a lot of local support," Cave said. "Being able to go home and get that home-cooked meal makes it even better."

NBC's "Onward Notre Dame" featured Cave and the rest of the offensive live eating dinner at Cave's home in Granger.

After making the decision to come to Notre Dame, Cave immediately found a mentor in veteran offensive lineman Eric Olsen.

"Eric Olsen pretty much right away took me under his wing," Cave said. "We're kind of similar personalities. We just clicked right away."



ASHLEY DACY | The Observer

**Senior center Braxton Cave gets ready to snap the ball in Notre Dame's 30-13 win over Oklahoma on Oct. 27 in Norman, Okla. Cave started his Irish career as a long snapper before starting at center.**

Now, he is part of a veteran group on the line that includes two fifth-year seniors in Cave and guard Mike Golic, Jr., senior tackle Zach Martin, senior guard Chris Watt and junior tackle Christian Lombard.

"It's a unique group," Cave said. "We're with each other all day every day. It's pretty much we're all like brothers, fist fights one second, laughing and jokes the next. It makes it pretty fun."

Cave has been around for a great deal of change during his time at Notre Dame.

After his sophomore season in which the Irish went 6-6, Notre Dame fired former coach Charlie Weis and abandoned the system Cave was recruited to play in. The Irish hired Brian Kelly and the entire offense had to adjust to a new system and style.

But Cave said his reaction to the situation depended on perspective — he saw it as an opportunity, rather than a disruption.

"It was tough at first," Cave said. "But it's all in how you take it, how you look at it. I looked at it as a fresh start. It was me being able to take advantage of a great opportunity."

Cave has practiced at both center and guard and played 12 games as a long snapper in 2009, but he much prefers being the man with the ball at his fingertips before every play.

"Being the guy in the middle who's got to communicate and get everybody on the same page is a big responsibility," Cave said. "I wouldn't want to have it any other way."

During his junior and senior years, Cave started every game that he played in, 13 in 2010 and nine in 2011 before suffering a season-ending injury. This year, Cave has started every game at center and has contributed to an improved ground game.

"The rushing improvement in the last two years is something we're definitely proud of," Cave said.

Growing up a Notre Dame fan, Cave understands the historical rivalries, but he doesn't let himself get distracted by looking ahead to

those marquee matchups.

"Obviously, there's tradition that comes along with playing Michigan and USC," Cave said. "But with the schedule we've played this year, you can't really sleep on anybody."

If he had to pick one memorable moment from his career thus far, Cave said coming out onto the field was something he'll never forget.

"As an offensive lineman, you don't really get those highlights," Cave said. "That was just one of the more sentimental things for me."

Notre Dame's success this year is something that prompts questions about what is different — in the locker room, in the team's mindset. But Cave can't put his finger on something specific that is different other than the work ethic this team possesses.

"It's a really close group," Cave said. "The biggest thing is that it's a group of guys that comes to work every day with one goal in mind. I can't really explain it. It's a special group."

With that success comes added pressure. Notre Dame gets every team's best shot, evident in the elevated play by mediocre teams like Pittsburgh and Purdue. For that reason, Cave said it's essential that the Irish prepare week-in and week-out. But Cave commends the team for stepping up to this challenge.

"Every game is so important," Cave said. "We've had some close ones with some teams that the fans may have overlooked, or thought that we would stomp them. Everybody's preparing for the

Super Bowl when they play Notre Dame. We're ready for that."

Another striking aspect of this season has been Notre Dame's success on the road relative to its performance at home. But Cave can't point to a reason why that is the case, either.

"It's an 'Us against the world' mentality," Cave said. "There's no reason why we play better on the road than at home."

"I do love the hatred that comes with playing on the road. It makes it fun. It makes a live environment. I go out there and let my playing speak for itself. I've never gotten caught up in the moment with fans. I've got a job to do that's way more important than all that other stuff that's going."

As an undefeated team, Notre Dame can't avoid the speculation about the possibility of playing for the BCS National Championship. But with the current format, the Irish could finish the regular season without a loss and still not make it to Miami for the title game, and Cave said he and the Irish can't focus on anything out of their control.

"All we can worry about is what we're doing," Cave said. "We play the toughest schedule in the country. If that's not good enough, then we've done our part. Everything else lies in someone else's hands."

With just a few games left in his collegiate career, Cave cannot help but be a bit nostalgic about his time at Notre Dame.

"I was talking to my parents about [my career ending] the other day," Cave said. "They can't believe it's almost over. It's been a crazy journey, definitely special. It's something I'll remember for the rest of my life. But I'm trying to hold on to each game for everything it's worth right now."

But Cave knows he's prepared for life beyond Notre Dame. Because of the demands placed upon student-athletes at Notre Dame, the players learn skills they can carry with them and Cave said he recognizes that.

"The sheer discipline that it takes to not only play football here, but to go to school — the loads are heavy," Cave said. "So learning how to manage time and get everything done that you've got to get done, and then also become the best football player you can. It's harder here than anywhere. If you can do it here, it just prepares for you for anything you could take on later in life."



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

**Senior center Braxton Cave makes a block during Notre Dame's 50-10 season-opening win over Navy in Dublin on Sept. 1.**

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TYLER EIFERT | TE | FORT WAYNE, IND.

# Eifert returns to school, adjusts to new role

Senior tight end goes from unheralded recruit to All-American and future NFL Draft pick

By ANDREW GASTELUM  
Associate Sports Editor

*Editor's Note: A version of this article originally appeared in the Nov. 2 edition of The Observer.*

Last December, the process began. Tyler Eifert filled out the NFL Draft evaluation paperwork and endlessly ran through both scenarios in his head. To return or leave, that was the grueling question.

"I was really close," the senior tight end said. "It was kind of different every day, but at some points I was about to go."

Despite projections as a second- or third-round pick from draft experts, Eifert found it too difficult to leave an opportunity to graduate with a degree from Notre Dame and, ultimately, the lasting bonds he built.

"I wanted to make sure I had my degree," Eifert said. "I wasn't very far away from that and I wanted to get that. And you only get this shot one time and I didn't want to cut it short."

"I've had too much fun here being a kid with my friends and developing a good relationship with my coaches. I just wasn't ready to grow up, I guess."

Eifert credits his mentor, former Notre Dame and current Minnesota Vikings tight end Kyle Rudolph, with guiding him throughout the process. Since Rudolph opted for the NFL Draft following his junior year — he was selected in the second round with the 43rd pick — Eifert said he confided in Rudolph to help him make the decision that suited him best.

"I still stay in contact with Rudy," Eifert said. "He left early, so I went to him a lot last year for advice. And even this year, just about the process because I had never been through it."

When he hears his name

called at Radio City Music Hall this April, Eifert said he isn't sure how he will react, only that the NFL won't change the player he has unremittingly worked so hard to become.

"Nothing will change from the NFL-me to the college-me," he said. "I'm just going to come to work, do my job and have fun doing it. I'm just going to do my best to put myself in the best position to get drafted as high as possible."

But for a co-captain on a team ranked third in the Bowl Championship Series, there is ample reason to push that thought aside.

"I'm not really thinking about [the NFL] because there is a lot left to play," Eifert said. "We're 8-0 so everyone is feeling pretty good, including myself."

## All-American journey

Coming out of Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne, Ind., Eifert was labeled as a low-level three-star recruit and received offers from Big Ten schools such as Indiana, Northwestern and Purdue.

"There wasn't really [a chip on my shoulder]," Eifert said. "I've always believed in myself, but I've tried to stay level whether that's good or bad and tried to be the same guy everyday."

"I've done my best to be a good teammate and put in a lot of hard work for the past few years. I was going to work hard and try to play if I really had [the opportunity]."

That opportunity came midway through his sophomore year, when Rudolph tore his hamstring that required season-ending surgery. In his first start, Eifert caught four passes for 72 yards and a touchdown. Since then, the 6-foot-6 tight end has started in 31 consecutive games for the Irish, motivated by a single fear only he



OE KENESEY | The Observer

*Irish senior tight end Tyler Eifert rises to catch a pass during Notre Dame's 17-14 win over BYU on Oct. 20. Eifert, who serves as one of Notre Dame's four captains, has 34 receptions for 470 yards on the season.*

can control.

"The thought of failing and of not doing well, I hate that," he said. "Just to come out and work hard and put yourself in the best position to succeed makes me feel good."

Eifert has turned into one of the premier receiving threats in the Kelly era, totaling 1,625 yards on 124 receptions and 10 touchdowns.

"Here's what I love about Tyler Eifert: You know you're moving your program along when your best players are your best workers," Irish coach Brian Kelly said in August. "He's just been incredible to work with over the past couple of years, to see his development and his maturity. He's a leader on our football team."

"When I first got here, he was in the back row. He was two or three rows back. Now he's up front. So you can understand from my perspective that's exciting when your best player, one of your best players has that kind of desire to be the best."

By the time he was a senior, Eifert had been named a Notre Dame captain, a finalist for the 2011 Mackey Award — given to the nation's top tight end — and a second-team All-American with NFL potential. If someone would have told him this on Signing Day in 2009, Eifert said he would have come across as more than skeptical.

"I'd probably say I'll believe it when it happens," he said. "I was one of the lower-rated guys coming in from our class, so I would have never expected it ... It's pretty cool. I've waited my turn and worked hard. Coming from that to where I am today, it's pretty awesome."

## Becoming the target

In his breakout junior season, Eifert caught 63 passes for 803 yards and five touchdowns. But with the departure of Michael Floyd, Eifert slid into the role of

playmaker, making him the No. 1 target for opposing defenses.

"[Getting double-teamed] is tough," he said. "Last year against Pitt they wouldn't let [Floyd] open and they had two guys on him. So that allowed me to make some plays. This year [teams] are double-teaming me so it allows other guys to make some plays."

Although he amassed a career-high 98 receiving yards against his childhood-favorite Purdue on Sept. 8, Eifert's numbers (341 yards, three touchdowns) have dropped from where they were a year ago. But that hasn't affected the tight end's ability to positively affect the offense in making his mark in run-blocking and drawing attention away from Irish receivers.

"Eif is one of those guys that's very dependable," senior captain Manti Te'o said before facing BYU. "He's not a mean player. He's not a selfish player. Obviously Eif is the best tight end in college football. He hasn't had the kind of receptions and numbers that he would like, but you never would see Tyler complaining. As long as we're winning, he's happy. He leads by example. He leads by his work ethic, and just really, really doing his best to ensure that our team wins."

One thing that defenses cannot take away from the pre-season All-American is his unmitigated calm and poise, put on full display as he took the field in the fourth quarter with the Irish tied at 13 with No. 8 Oklahoma.

"You can only control what you can do, so I don't let a lot of other things affect me," Eifert said of his composure. "As long as I stay under control and levelheaded, that'll give me my best chance to be my best."

Just as Rudolph and John Carlson before him, Eifert recognizes that he must fulfill his

role as mentor to the newest crop of tight ends: four-star recruits in junior Alex Welch and sophomores Ben Koyack and Troy Niklas.

"I know that I've been in that position so I know how they are feeling and I can relate to them a lot of times and help them with a lot," Eifert said. "I've never really thought about [how important I am to their success]. I just try to be a good teammate and do what I can to help. It will be cool to see them down the road."

Niklas made the switch to tight end in the spring, after seeing the field in all 12 games last season at outside linebacker. The 6-foot-7, 260-pound converted linebacker said Eifert has been an active source of support in helping him learn the intricacies of the Kelly offense.

"He's an All-American so he's been there," Niklas said. "It's really good to have someone who you can see do it because sometimes it's hard to know what coach is talking about. When you can see someone do it right, you know what to do. It just makes the learning process so much faster. If I ever have a question, I can just talk to him and just ask him."

For Eifert, the starting job entails the preservation of a longstanding tradition of NFL-quality Notre Dame tight ends, earning the program the nickname: "Tight End U."

"If you look down the line, we've had some really good tight ends in the past decade and going even further back," Eifert said. "So it's pretty cool to be a part of that. We recognize it for sure."

And for Eifert, it also entails the compelling vindication for returning for his senior season.

"I love Notre Dame and I love playing football here."

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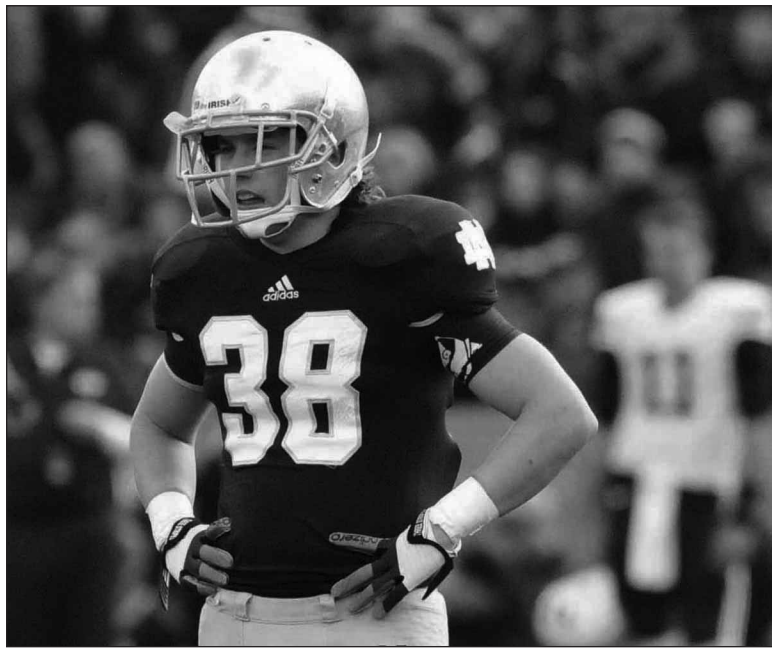
OE KENESEY | The Observer

*Senior tight end Tyler Eifert runs for a pass against BYU on Oct. 20. Eifert has 10 total touchdowns in his career, dating back to 2010.*



NICK FITZPATRICK | WR | MISHAWAKA, IND.

# Fitzpatrick stands out on scout team



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior receiver Nick Fitzpatrick warms up before Notre Dame's 17-14 win over BYU on Oct. 20 at Notre Dame Stadium.

By **SAM STRYKER**  
Assistant Managing Editor

When Notre Dame beat Michigan for the first time since 2008 on Sept. 22, the Irish had prepared for victory long before they took the field against the Wolverines. Part of that groundwork fell on the shoulders of senior receiver Nick Fitzpatrick, who played Michigan quarterback Denard Robinson on the scout team in practice, helping ready the Irish defense for the

shifty Wolverines signal-caller.

"Part of it was watching film and understanding their scheme, but the other part of it is he is a dynamic football player that can do anything at any time," Fitzpatrick said. "He can throw the ball, he can run the ball, he makes plays when there is no play to be made."

Fitzpatrick said portraying Robinson entailed not only studying the Michigan quarterback's on-the-field habits, but also enacting them in practice.

"Part of it was preparing throughout the week, and the other part of it was going out there and playing with your instincts and trying to make high-risk, high-reward plays," he said. "I thought we did a good job, the offense in general."

The accounting major from Mishawaka, Ind., said portraying the athletic Wolverines quarterback was an incredible experience.

"It was a blast," he said. "I mean, any time you get to go out there and play quarterback, give a look for one of the most dynamic players in college football and go up against one of the best defenses in college football, it was a unique opportunity and a lot of fun."

A former resident of Dillon Hall, Fitzpatrick walked on to the team as a sophomore in August of 2010. His older brother D.J. Fitzpatrick was a kicker and punter with the Irish and graduated in 2005, and his grandfather also attended the University. Fitzpatrick said attending Notre Dame had always been a dream growing up.

"It's a place I always knew I wanted to be, and football was kind of icing on the cake," he said.

A kicker, receiver and cornerback at Marian High School,

Fitzpatrick nearly was a kicker for the Irish, but instead walked on as a receiver, something the team needed at the time.

"As a walk-on, you never know what your role is going to be and it is always changing. So any way you can contribute to the team is a success," he said. "It's different for each guy, but I feel I have contributed in a lot of different ways. I feel pretty good about what I have accomplished so far."

Fitzpatrick said he has also enjoyed serving as a mentor for some of the younger players, especially helping fellow walk-ons understand their role with the Irish.

"They just need to understand whether or not they are going to start or never play a down, their roles are important," he said. "It is always changing; they are always going to ask you to do different things at different times."

"When your name is called, your number is called, you need to go in there and contribute in an important fashion. You always need to be ready. That's important for young guys to understand."

Though Fitzpatrick said he does not feel there has been a definitive moment in his tenure with the team, he feels he has

been able to contribute more and more during his time with the Irish.

"I think it has slowly built from day one. My role has become more and more valuable I guess I could say. I'm doing a lot now, playing a lot of different positions on scout offense," he said. "When you go out there and contribute to something special and what we have done so far this year, it is certainly satisfying."

An avid sportsman, Fitzpatrick said he enjoys his time on the golf course the most out of all his athletic pursuits, with Lake Nona in Orlando, Fla., ranking as his favorite course he has ever played.

"I fancy myself an all-around athlete," he said. "I play golf and I played basketball in high school. Golf is my go-to. I think I'm the best on the team."

Though he does not play much during the football season, Fitzpatrick said he is looking forward to hitting the links more after the season is over.

"Golf is something I will continue to play for the rest of my life," he said. "It's an important sport that can teach you a lot about yourself. I really enjoy it."

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JAKE GOLIC | TE | WEST HARTFORD, CONN.

# Golic continues family legacy at Notre Dame

By **JOSEPH MONARDO**  
Sports Writer

Family legacy and University tradition combined to create a special occasion on a Saturday afternoon in 2009. Irish tight end Jake Golic prepared to take the field for the first time in an Irish uniform.

"Man, the first time I ran out of the tunnel [is a clear memory]," Golic said. "I was standing right next to my brother, I could see my folks up in the stands. I was just overtaken by emotion at that point. It was something I had waited for since the beginning of my conscious memory, so it was a huge thing for me."

Golic's first time running out of the tunnel in Notre Dame Stadium fulfilled what had been for him a journey begun, at least in part, long before his birth. His father, Mike Golic Sr., and uncles, Bob and Greg Golic, all played football at Notre Dame from 1975 to 1985. Golic's older brother Mike Golic Jr., is a graduate student right guard while his younger sister Sydney Golic is a freshman swimmer at Notre Dame.

Despite the extensive tradition of the Golic football players at Notre Dame, Jake Golic said he never felt pressure from his father or anyone else to choose

Notre Dame.

"My dad told me from day one, 'it doesn't matter that I went there and your brother goes there,'" he said. "'You know it's your choice. Wherever you are most comfortable, you can go there.' But I knew in my mind this is the place I wanted to be. It just felt right."

The attraction he felt to Notre Dame was enough to draw Golic to play football for the Irish, but his family's connections to the program have helped to make his career especially enjoyable, Golic said.

"It's incredibly special," he said. "It's a huge honor and a blessing. Not a lot of people can say they played on the same field as their dad and with their brother at the same time. So it's a very cool thing and I've never taken a day for granted here and I've loved every moment I've been here."

The West Hartford, Conn., native has also helped to establish a new Notre Dame tradition during his time with the Irish. Golic is one of the founders of "Trick Shot Monday," a locker room game which requires the players to shoot a ping-pong ball into a Gatorade cup.

"I was one of the people that started it," Golic said. "It was originally me, [graduate-student

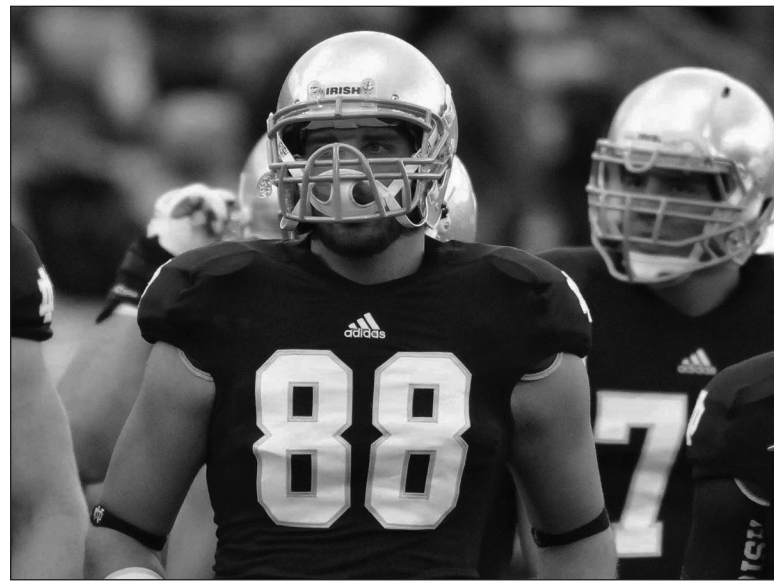
defensive end] Kapron Lewis-Moore and [junior quarterback] Andrew Hendrix my sophomore year ... So at this point we have pretty much passed the torch ... down to the younger guys. So it's in their hands now, wherever it goes it's up to them."

Video of the game, which appears on YouTube each week, has worked its way into the national spotlight after appearances on ESPN shows "SportsCenter" and "College GameDay." Golic said he has been surprised that Trick Shot Monday has received so much attention.

"I got a tweet one morning, it said 'Check out SportsCenter, you are No. 2 [on the top 10],' " he said. "I was like, 'There's got to be a mistake there.' I turn it on, I was blown away. It was pretty cool."

Golic is enrolled in the College of Arts and Letters and is majoring in Design. The self-described "computer geek" said he chose the major because it appealed to his interests and offered the chance to do something different than his dad and brother.

Golic's choice of major represents the same willingness to forge a path of his own he showed in the program that has featured the names of several of his relatives. His family's legacy



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior tight end Jake Golic, pictured above against BYU, has followed in a long line of family members who played in an Irish uniform.

at Notre Dame never acted as a negative force or burden, Golic said.

"As long as you try your best every day, it doesn't matter what the outcome is," he said. "If you put in the work you think you need to and you do everything possible ... I don't think there is any kind of burden that comes along with it."

Golic made three appearances in 2009 on special teams and offense and has seen time on the field in 2012. Although he may have created what will become the next Irish tradition, Golic

said his favorite aspect of being a part of the Irish involves one of the program's more recognizable and storied traditions.

"Just putting that gold helmet on," he said. "Every time you get to run out of that tunnel. I only have two opportunities to do that left and I am really [going to] soak it up these next two times because that is what I'll miss the most, is strapping it on and running out of that tunnel and seeing those fans."

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DAN FOX | LB | ROCKY RIVER, OHIO

# Fox develops into key linebacker

Senior linebacker grows his hair out and becomes consistent performer for Irish defense



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior linebacker Dan Fox tackles a Pittsburgh running back on Nov. 3. Fox ranks fourth on Notre Dame with 51 tackles this season.

By ANDREW GASTELUM  
Associate Sports Editor

*Editor's Note: A version of this article originally appeared in the Oct. 19 edition of The Observer.*

According to legend, the biblical character Samson was blessed with phenomenal strength, yet there was one condition to his clout: He could never cut his hair.

Since his last haircut, senior linebacker Dan Fox has added over 20 pounds of muscle. Coincidence? Fox thinks not.

"No, no, no, it's not true, but it's a cool story," said Fox, who often draws comparisons to Samson from others. "People say all the time, 'You can't cut it or you will lose all of your strength.' But I don't believe that. It's funny though."

Instead, the 6-foot-3, 240-pound linebacker nicknamed "Foxy" finds a better comparison for his hair rooted in the locks of an NFL icon. "I get a lot of [Packers linebacker] Clay Matthews comparisons," Fox said. "He's a really good player so it's great to be compared to him. But hopefully I can try to be as good as he is."

Despite the uncanny similarities he shares with Samson, Fox said he holds one definite advantage over the heroic character.

"I use shampoo and conditioner all the time," Fox said. "But I just got this Garnier Fructis oil stuff. It's kind of like Moroccan oil and you put it in your hair to make it soft. It's pretty sweet."

## Growing it out

When he attended an all-boys Catholic high school at St. Ignatius in Cleveland, Fox met hair length requirements set by the school's administration. But once graduation

came, Fox was free to create his own image.

"I've been growing my hair since the end of high school. I had this dean of discipline, Mr. Arthur, who made me cut it before graduation [in 2009] and I haven't gotten a haircut since.

"At first it was just that I never got it cut. I was that kid in college that never had a haircut. And then after it just started to fall back I just let it go. Now it's just like I'm never going to get a haircut. I was thinking next year if I come back for my fifth year of getting dreads. I told my mom that and she was not having it."

Even though he does not have to adhere to the strict rules of high school these days, Fox said that doesn't stop people from trying to get him to clean up.

"A lot of people usually will tweet at me: 'Cut your hair,'" he said. "But then I just say, 'Why?'"

Fox heads a group of long-locked Irish players, which includes junior defensive end Kona Schwenke, sophomore linebacker Ishaq Williams, sophomore defensive tackle Tony Springmann, senior tight end Tyler Eifert and sophomore running back Cam McDaniel. As far as becoming a distraction during games, Fox brushed past his first and only bad hair day.

"Actually it really hasn't gotten in the way. It's crazy—the first game I played was against Purdue [in 2010]," he said. "I was running down on the first kickoff and a dude just grabs it. The first play [in an Irish uniform] and I said 'Oh is this what's going to happen?' But it has not been touched since then."

## Strong safety switch

After winning a state

championship during his senior year at St. Ignatius, Fox committed to Notre Dame as a four-star-rated safety, turning down offers from Stanford, Michigan State and Boston College among others. Fox didn't see any action in his freshman year at Notre Dame, but used the time to make an exacting transition to linebacker.

"I was excited," Fox said. "A linebacker at Notre Dame, that's something to be excited about. That was sweet when I first found out. I wasn't sure how it was going to translate and how I was going to pick it up, but [defensive coordinator Bob] Diaco did an awesome job helping me out. He started me from scratch, taught me all of the basics. He just took me under his wing and helped me out. He is one of the best defensive coordinators in the country without a doubt."

A combination of hair-trigger instincts and breakthrough speed made the safety the perfect candidate to make the switch to linebacker, as his exploits as a top 110-meter hurdler in high school heightened Fox's athletic appeal. But now, Fox has to comb his way through offensive linemen rather than meeting the ball carrier at the second level.

"The guys coming after you are a lot bigger," he said. "I didn't really do anything specific to try to gain weight. I just stuck to [strength and conditioning coach Paul] Longo's strength program and I put on about 20 pounds. So that really helps when I try to slam into [senior guard] Chris Watt in practice. He's thick, so I just remember running into him the first time and telling myself, 'Welcome to inside linebacker.'"

"But something that has really translated for me is that speed. Except in college football everyone is fast. That's

something I kind of got used to instead of being the fastest guy on the field, now I'm just one of the fast people on the field."

In 2011, Fox started in all 13 games and recorded 48 tackles at his inside linebacker position. He returned to the Irish defense this season as one of only two players to start every game last season, where Irish coach Brian Kelly said he made striking progress.

"Well, I think, first of all, he's a very physical player," Kelly said. "Though I would not say that he wasn't physical last year. I think just overall knowledge of the position. As you know, the [weaksid] linebacker position for him was something new. I thought he adapted very well last year. There were times that we thought that he was clearly the No. 1 player at that position."

## Making interior progress

Oftentimes, the linebacker's persona on the field doesn't get too far past being the "guy with the hair." Fox is off to a career year in 2012, having already recorded 51 tackles in 10 games, yet is often overshadowed by the Heisman contender he lines up next to. But Fox said he owes senior linebacker Manti Te'o the bulk of the credit for his success at his new position.

"I kind of do [like being under the radar]," Fox said. "It's kind of funny on defense, they snap the ball and everyone is trying to get the tackle. But there aren't too many tackles to be had because [Te'o] is snatching up a lot."

"He's showed me the way, to be honest. It helps so much when you can understand everything on the defense and what other people are doing so you can know why the ball is going where and where you need to be. If you just understand the defense you can play so much faster and I

really think that is what he's helped me with."

Fox's consistency plays a major role in the nation's top red-zone defense.

"You see Dan Fox play, and he doesn't hesitate," Te'o said. "He is a lot more confident in his ability to make plays and comfortable in the scheme. He knows what to do, he knows that the guy next to him is doing, and he knows where I'm going to be."

"Combine that with confidence, you will get Dan Fox's process throughout his career here at Notre Dame. He'll get better."

In Notre Dame's 20-13 overtime win over Stanford on November 13, Fox recorded six tackles, but was not included in Notre Dame's goal line package. So he watched the defense's Samson-esque goal line stand from the sidelines.

"I was nervous, but then again I have full confidence in everyone on that defense," Fox said. "I just knew we were going to win. Once it went to [overtime] I knew we were winning that game."

"We just know we have each other's backs when it comes down to it. If you make a mistake, someone is going to get in your face about it. That's the thing; you're held accountable. That's how you're going to get good. You have your weaknesses and you have to get better at them. It's about letting things go and knowing that we are going to get better and be one of the best defenses in the country."

When asked about his golden-brown locks, the player who comes across more as a surfer than a linebacker was breezy instead of flippant.

"I don't think the power's in the hair," Fox said. "I guess it's just attached to the power. That's pretty funny though."

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SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior linebacker Dan Fox has started 23 straight games dating back to the beginning of the 2011 season. The inside linebacker recorded 48 tackles in the 2011 campaign, his first as a full-time starter.



MIKE GOLIC JR. | OL | WEST HARTFORD, CONN.

# Golic emerges as versatile lineman

*Graduate student right guard becomes face of 'Trick Shot Monday,' opens holes for Irish backs*

By **CORY BERNARD**  
Sports Writer

When citing reasons for committing to Notre Dame, most athletes will mention the university's unique combination of academics and athletics. Others will refer to Notre Dame's religious atmosphere and sense of community. Although graduate student guard Mike Golic Jr., acknowledges all of these aspects, his decision to play football for the Irish differs from most of his teammates.

His father Mike, who now co-hosts an ESPN show, and uncles Bob and Greg all played for the Irish. Mike Jr. wasn't certain he would receive the opportunity, but he said he only wanted to play football for one school.

"I mean, obviously, you have to look around, because you never know what's for certain," he said. "I mean, it wasn't a guarantee I was going to get offered here so I had to plan accordingly in case that wasn't an option. I looked at other schools, I visited other schools, but in my heart of hearts this is where I wanted to be, so it was really a no-brainer. I kind of wanted to follow in the family footsteps and do all that stuff."

With such a strong family legacy, Golic grew up rooting for the Irish. He said his family annually travelled from their

home in Connecticut to South Bend for games well before he became a Division I football recruit.

"I had been coming to Notre Dame at least a game or two every year since I was in the third or fourth grade, so it was a place I felt really comfortable with," Golic said.

With a national recruiting base, the football team boasts a coast-to-coast roster. Players frequently deal with homesickness while at Notre Dame. However, Golic said his classmates and family helped stave off a longing for home.

"We were a class that had grown so close through recruiting," Golic said. "I mean, there were guys I had known since beginning or middle of my junior year of high school just from coming to games, coming on visits and everything and being around each other. Also, obviously my parents came out here for all the games, so I didn't have to deal with the homesickness quite as much. Obviously you still go through it living on your own for the first time, but there was a definite comfort right away, and I owe a lot of that to the guys I came in with."

Despite feeling comfortable at Notre Dame, Golic said riding the bench early in his career still frustrated him.

"I mean, we all come in here



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

**Irish graduate student right guard Mike Golic Jr., lines up against Pittsburgh during Notre Dame's 29-26 win over the Panthers on Nov. 3. Golic has played in 37 games in his Notre Dame career.**

big recruits, guys that were dominant in the high school level and were used to being the man there," he said. "When that doesn't go your way here, obviously it's a new level and it is frustrating, especially over that couple-of-year period. You really have to do a lot of soul searching and dig down really deep to kind of keep pushing through all that."

When the coaches finally called Golic's number, he had to replace a classmate. Graduate student center Braxton Cave injured his foot last season, and Golic started the final four games of the season at center. He said the opportunity validated years of preparation. But according to Golic, being a full-time starter from day one this season necessitates a different approach.

"Obviously last year is proof of that preparation," he said. "You work hard every day and you go through the game plan, watch all the film in practice to be ready when something like that happens when you're a backup. So, obviously, it's satisfying to go in there and know that you're helping the team in the way that you always knew you could."

"However, there is a different sense this year of knowing you're going to be that guy from the first snap of the game until the end. If all goes well, you're going to be that guy in there the whole game. You know that going into the week, so you can prepare accordingly with that, so it's definitely a different feeling."

The Irish have improved mightily from last season to this season, and the same can be said for Golic. He said if his current improvement

continues, he will attempt to fulfill a lifelong dream of donning an NFL jersey.

"That's kind of up for grabs right now," Golic said of his future. "Obviously, I want to take the shot at the next level if everything keeps going well this season and work out for pro day and see where things go with that, take the shot there. At this point that's really the plan."

Though his football future is uncertain, his effect on locker room morale is not. Golic, the face of Notre Dame's "Trick Shot Monday" YouTube sensation, said he hopes the weekly game will continue after he leaves.

"A lot of younger guys have gravitated towards it, and I think it's something that the fans really enjoy and guys really like it and look forward to it every Monday," he said. "I mean, it's everyone's chance for that little 15-minute window to blow off some steam and have some fun. I hope that keeps going on after I'm gone. I mean, we'll see what happens with it, but regardless it's had

a really good run — definitely a lot more than we expected."

Though most football fans know his father, a 1984 team captain for Notre Dame and 1985 NFL Draft pick more than him, Golic does play for a 10-0 Irish squad in the hunt for the national championship.

"At this point, yeah that's something I have on [my father]," Golic said of the undefeated season. "His whole years here [they were] never much above .500 just kind of the way we were, so to have this last year really go so well gives me a little bit of bragging rights on him. He was a heck of a ball player, that's for sure and everyone obviously still remembers that around here. It's a well-deserved legacy that he and my uncles left here."

If the season continues on its current trajectory, Golic will add more than simply a game involving a ping pong ball and a cup to his family's storied Notre Dame legacy.

Contact Cory Bernard at [cbernard@nd.edu](mailto:cbernard@nd.edu)



ASHLEY DACY | The Observer

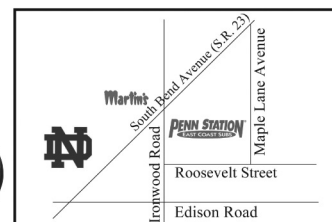
**Irish graduate student right guard Mike Golic Jr., shown during Notre Dame's 30-13 win over Oklahoma, has started every game this season.**

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JOHN GOODMAN | WR | FORT WAYNE, IND.

# Goodman mentors young players

Quarterback turned graduate student receiver returns for fifth year, makes big catches

By MEGHAN THOMASSEN  
Sports Writer

Graduate student receiver John Goodman enters his final home game at Notre Dame with 32 receptions for 392 yards under his belt and four touchdowns — one passing and three receiving. Behind the statistics, however, some instantly memorable plays stand out.

Goodman is best known for his performance in Notre Dame's 44-20 victory over Western Michigan in 2010. The former high school quarterback hit receiver Michael Floyd with a 32-yard pass to put the Irish ahead of the Broncos 14-7.

Although Goodman only has four catches this season, they have been big ones.

During the 20-3 win over Michigan State, he made an astounding one-handed, 36-yard touchdown catch after sophomore quarterback Everett Golson improvised to keep the play alive. Goodman also snatched a late pass from junior quarterback Tommy Rees that led to a game-winning field goal in Notre Dame's 20-17 win over Purdue.

Goodman made a similar play in the 21-6 win over Boston College after Golson extended the play with his feet. Goodman found space in the corner of the end zone and Golson



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

**Irish graduate student receiver John Goodman celebrates his touchdown during Notre Dame's 21-6 win over Boston College on Saturday. Goodman enters his final home game with four catches in 2012 and 32 for his career,**

fired a cross-field pass for the touchdown.

Goodman said this year's game against Stanford was one of the highlights of the season, even though he didn't see any playing time during the contest due to injury.

"When I think of my five years here, in my five seasons, there have been a lot of ups and downs, and [the Stanford game] was probably the most special game we've been through, because we

had 'College GameDay' for the first time and I'd never experienced that," he said.

But for Goodman, the 30-13 win over Oklahoma on Oct. 27 remains the most memorable contest of his career.

"I would say the coolest thing was going to Oklahoma and winning there because that was the most hostile environment we've ever played in, and probably the biggest game we've ever played here in the past five years," he

said.

For his final home game, Goodman said he feels the way he did during last year's senior game, when he still hadn't heard whether the Irish would take him up for his last year of eligibility.

"Last year it was really crazy because I didn't know if I was going to get my fifth year or not, and I didn't know if they wanted me back or not, so I kind of treated the last game last year like it was my last game. Seeing my class leave and then get out, but then getting invited back was wild," he said. "But this is actually my last game and something I won't forget."

The Fort Wayne, Ind., native leaves the team known as a mentor for younger players.

"I wanted to develop them as much as possible," Goodman said. "I knew there were younger guys who would have to step up. It's fun watching them develop as players."

As the second-oldest player on the team, Goodman said one of his younger teammates gave him the nickname "Grandpa."

"It's something I take pride in, they're all my kids, I guess," he said. "That's something I really wanted to do when I saw this class coming in was a really solid class. [Senior receiver Robby] Toma and [junior receiver T.J. Jones] have made so many plays as well. When you have that much experience helping younger guys, you get better as well. I feel like a parent talking right now."

Even though he is the youngest of four siblings, holding a strong leadership role isn't unfamiliar territory for Goodman. At Bishop Dwenger High School, the same school that produced senior tight end Tyler Eifert, he moved to quarterback as a senior and guided his team to an undefeated regular season and No. 1 ranking before falling in the state semifinals.

But it was his two years as

a high school receiver that attracted a scholarship offer from former Irish coach Charlie Weis. Goodman did not see any game action his freshman year but had his first career start against USC in 2009 and played in nine games during his sophomore year. He caught two passes for 73 yards, including a highlight-reel 64-yard touchdown during Notre Dame's 40-14 victory over Washington State in 2009.

In 2010, the 6-foot-3, 215-pound receiver started against Boston College, Pittsburgh and Navy and recorded 15 receptions for 146 yards. Last year, Goodman had seven catches for 65 yards.

Goodman said he credits his success to mentors from his early career, former receivers David Grimes, Robby Parris and George West.

"When I was a freshman, I looked up to ... those guys were guys who were here with me day in and day out teaching me the ropes. I just wanted to be what they are when I was a freshman, just to be the leader," Goodman said. "They helped me so much to get to where I am and I thank them whenever it's needed, whenever they deserve it."

Goodman said he knows the younger players will follow suit.

"I think it's just something about Notre Dame, that's what's special about it," he said.

He said he wished his teammates well as he bids farewell to his time at Notre Dame.

"I'm happy to see that all the guys that left and went to play at other places are doing well, and I wish the best for them, especially all the guys at the NFL and the guys who are at jobs," he said.

Goodman graduated from the Mendoza College of Business in May with a degree in management consulting and is currently enrolled in a graduate studies program.

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KAPRON LEWIS-MOORE | DE | WEATHERFORD, TEXAS

# Lewis-Moore captains Irish in fifth year

*Graduate student defensive end comes back from knee injury to anchor Irish defensive line*



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

*Graduate student Kapron Lewis-Moore engages an Oklahoma offensive lineman during Notre Dame's 30-13 win over the Sooners on Oct. 27. Lewis-Moore has 4.5 sacks this season.*

By **MATTHEW DeFRANKS**

Associate Sports Editor

*Editor's Note: A version of this article originally appeared in the Nov. 9 edition of The Observer.*

Kapron Lewis-Moore is all about having a good time. From his trademark smile to his booming laugh and his goofy faces, the graduate student defensive end loves to have fun.

So when last year's basketball season rolled around, the decision was simple for the Weatherford, Texas, native — wear a floppy Safari hat to the games and stand in the front row of the student section.

"It's just something I like to wear," Lewis-Moore said. "At that point in time in basketball season, I kind of wore it everywhere. I think that's how I got noticed for it."

In his five years at Notre Dame, though, Lewis-Moore has been noticed for more than his headgear. The 6-foot-4, 306-pound lineman has been a stalwart for the Irish defensive line, racking up 140 tackles and six sacks in his three seasons before 2012.

After graduating in May with a marketing degree, Lewis-Moore returned for his fifth season with the Irish.

## Captaining a team

Before the season, Irish

coach Brian Kelly named Lewis-Moore one of Notre Dame's four captains, along with seniors Manti Te'o, Tyler Eifert and Zack Martin.

"It's been awesome," Lewis-Moore said. "I'm very honored and fortunate to be in this leadership position and it's pretty exciting. I just want to keep my energy, keep my effort and enthusiasm, try to keep that contagious to the team."

During a team meeting in August, Kelly announced the four captains for the first time, before he told the captains.

"He called my name last and I wasn't really expecting it because we have a lot of guys on the team that are worthy of being captains," Lewis-Moore said. "To hear my name called was really something special."

"It was kind of like 'Whoa' and I got a little teary-eyed. I knew this season was going to be special but to be captain is just something I can't really explain. It's speechless."

During games, Lewis-Moore has given pep talks to younger players on the sideline after a mistake or will congratulate them after a big play — offense or defense, it doesn't matter.

"If they make a mistake or if they don't make a mistake, you have to have fun, you have to go on to the next play," Lewis-Moore said. "You can't let one bad play hurt you all game because your mistakes will build

up. If you make a good play, we're going to be there to celebrate with you."

Lewis-Moore said the support goes both ways on sidelines.

"We feed off of each other, offense and defense," he said. "Sometimes in the heat of the battle or the moment of the game, you might go up to a guy and go 'Hey, keep it up' or 'Guys, don't worry about it, we have your back.' If the defense makes a mistake, you'll have [junior quarterback Tommy Rees] or Eifert or Martin come up and say 'Don't worry D, we're going to put it in the end zone.'"

Kelly said Lewis-Moore's impact on the team extends past the box score.

"It's night and day in my eyes outside of the statistics as to his impact last year as to this year," Kelly said. "Now he was a junior last year and he's a senior this year, too. But he's one of the reasons why we're 9-0."

## Mentoring the line

On the defensive line, Lewis-Moore is the elder statesman of a rotation that features two juniors, two sophomores and a freshman who all contribute significantly.

Entering this season, Lewis-Moore had almost three times as many starts as juniors Louis Nix and Kona Schwenke, sophomores Stephon Tuitt and Tony Springmann and freshman

Sheldon Day combined.

"It's fun watching them grow," Lewis-Moore said. "I've seen Tuitt grow. I've seen Lou grow. I've seen Sheldon grow every day. It's really awesome and it's something I take pride in. I'm kind of like the old man of the team. It's different to have that close relationship with your defensive linemen."

Lewis-Moore, who is affectionately known as 'Old Man Kap,' said despite the development of the younger players, there are always opportunities for instruction.

"There's always room for teaching," he said. "[Defensive line coach Mike Elston] is teaching us all really well and we all feed off each other. When one of us makes a big play, we all get excited. We have great communication between the defensive line, coach Elston and the coaching staff. It works really good."

The Irish defensive line has accounted for 21 of Notre Dame's 31 sacks this season but also does the little things. Lewis-Moore said such is the life of a defensive lineman.

"It's a mentality," he said. "I really don't care about personal stats. As long as we're winning games, that's what's really important. I don't care who makes the sack. With the whole defense, you really don't care who makes the play, as long as we're getting three-and-outs and forcing turnovers and playing 100 percent. If we're playing fast and physical, it really doesn't matter who gets the praise."

After a quiet first five games, Lewis-Moore has come on strong recently, registering four sacks in the last five games.

"He's been a better football player for us this year," Kelly said. "He is an extremely productive player, is playing with a lot energy, and has been a great

leader for us."

## Returning from injury

During last season's 31-17 loss to USC, Lewis-Moore detached his medial collateral ligament and required season-ending surgery five days later.

"It was awful," Lewis-Moore said. "True senior year and not being able to play is one of the worst feelings in the world. Not being able to do anything about it was really tough. Luckily, I leaned on my close friends and my family and my teammates to help me get through it. I worked hard in rehab and I was able to come back full strength."

Lewis-Moore rehabbed his knee during the offseason and returned for the season-opener against Navy. He said the rehab process was difficult.

"It wasn't really physically tough but mentally, it takes a toll on you," Lewis-Moore said. "You kind of want to rush it to come back but you're not supposed to. Sometimes during rehab, you just want to get out there and run again or lift weights again."

With his reconstructed knee, Lewis-Moore is having arguably his best season to date. He has already registered a career-high in sacks for a season and has also tallied 31 tackles, 5.5 tackles for loss and seven quarterback hurries.

"Obviously, I wanted to have a good year but I think we're having a tremendous year," Lewis-Moore said. "I can't really explain it. I'm just happy to be back. Being fortunate enough to be back for a fifth year, be with my teammates and fight on."

Lewis-Moore has had to fight his knee injury but there is one thing he has no problem doing — having fun.

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MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

*Graduate student defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore pursues Eagles quarterback Chase Rettig during Notre Dame's 21-6 win over Boston College.*



DENNIS MAHONEY | OT | BALTIMORE

# Mahoney looks toward law school after football



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Graduate student offensive lineman Dennis Mahoney watches during Notre Dame's 17-14 win over BYU on Oct. 20.

By **BRIAN HARTNETT**  
Sports Writer

Although it took graduate student offensive linesman Dennis Mahoney more than three seasons to get into a game, it didn't take him long to make an impact on the field.

Minutes after taking the field in the fourth quarter of Notre Dame's 59-33 victory over Air Force last October, Mahoney, playing right tackle, was asked to pull and block an inside

linebacker. Mahoney executed the play with ease and opened a hole to allow then-sophomore quarterback Andrew Hendrix to scramble 78 yards downfield, the longest run of the season for the Irish.

"It was the first time I had ever gone in, and they called the tackle pull," Mahoney said. "I was a little shocked, but it was great. The most special part of my time here was getting in the Air Force game."

The block against Air Force

represented the culmination of a dream for Mahoney, a life-long Notre Dame fan.

"My family always loved Notre Dame, and I was always a huge fan growing up," Mahoney said. "I always wanted to be part of it, and it was always the dream."

As Mahoney grew into his 6-foot-7, 294-pound frame, he became a force on the offensive line at Boys Latin School in Towson, Md., gathering all-conference honors. Although he received interest from Princeton, Harvard and other Ivy League schools, he decided to attend Notre Dame, where he had been accepted early as a student.

"It wasn't really that difficult," Mahoney said of his decision. "You're in front of 80,000 people [at Notre Dame], even if you're not playing, and just being part of Notre Dame is a different experience."

With the help of his high school coach, Mahoney contacted Irish coaches and sent them a highlight film at the end of his senior year. The Irish coaches responded by offering him a preferred walk-on spot, which allowed him to come to camp with regular scholarship players.

"I was in a different position because most walk-ons come on in the spring, so it was just me

and two other [preferred walk-ons]," Mahoney said. "It was different, but I got along well with everybody, and they were all very welcoming."

After getting through his initial fall camp, Mahoney spent the last five seasons practicing with the offensive line. The former Dillon Hall resident, who prefers to play tackle, said he has formed a tight bond with both his fellow linesmen and walk-ons.

"It's great because [the offensive linesmen and walk-ons] are tighter communities within the program," Mahoney said. "Those are the kids I'll be friends with forever."

Mahoney's strong work ethic on the line was rewarded last season when he appeared in two games. In addition to his appearance in the Air Force game, Mahoney made the team's travel roster and played against Maryland when the Irish visited FedEx Field in Washington last November.

"I think I had 22 people [at the Maryland game]," Mahoney said. "It was great to get back and see everybody, since they didn't always get to come to Notre Dame. My grandfather played for Maryland, and he was there, so it was special."

The history major graduated

in May and is currently enrolled in graduate courses. He said the decision to come back for a fifth year was not a difficult one.

"I just had the opportunity to come back, and I knew we'd do real well this year," he said. "I wanted to be part of it."

Mahoney said he is currently in the process of applying to law school. He plans to apply to Notre Dame, Virginia and Georgetown, among others.

Regardless of where he ends up, Mahoney said he is not quite sure how he will adjust to his life beyond football.

"It will be weird, since football's been my life the past four-and-a-half years," Mahoney said. "I don't really know what to expect, since I won't have to work out everyday or adjust my eating schedule for football."

In addition to his time on the football team, Mahoney said the close friendships he's created would be what he best remembers about Notre Dame.

"I think I'll take away the relationships I've made with people, day in and day out," he said. "Going through all this with others has allowed me to make some strong friendships that will last a lifetime."

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GRANT PATTON | DE | LOUISVILLE, KY.

# Patton transfers from Holy Cross, walks on

By **LAURA COLETTI**  
Sports Writer

"Have courage to pursue dreams."

These are the words etched on the inside of senior defensive end Grant Patton's class ring. They are words the Louisville, Ky., native has lived out since he made the best decision of his life the day after his high school prom four years ago.

"I did what every red-blooded American male does after prom, and that is, jump in the car and drive four-and-a-half hours to the Blue-Gold game," he said.

Originally slated to join the track and field program at Louisville as a thrower, Patton found himself at a crossroads at the Notre Dame bookstore that weekend in May.

"I saw a Notre Dame alumni shirt, and I had the realization that I'd never get to wear one," he said. "I had grown up going to Notre Dame games my entire life, and that was where I wanted to be."

Within 72 hours, Patton had applied, been accepted to, and enrolled at Holy Cross. Since that point in his college career, Patton's story has run in the same vein as the classic movie "Rudy."

"To this day, my dad calls [my

story] 'the Rudy thing,'" he said.

Patton interned with the Notre Dame athletic department and applied to transfer to Notre Dame for the fall of his sophomore year. After being rejected, he again applied to transfer that fall, to begin at Notre Dame during the spring semester of his sophomore year. Once again, he was not accepted.

"In this whole process, I learned a lot about perseverance, and about really going after what I wanted," Patton said.

Almost eerily similar to the movie's eponymous character, on his third and final time applying to transfer, Patton's perseverance paid off. He was accepted to Notre Dame and started there the fall of his junior year.

"I called my mom and told her. She thought I was kidding," he said. "There were a lot of people who didn't think I'd ever do it. Especially with football, there were a lot of people who thought I wouldn't get this."

After spending the fall semester playing interhall football for Sorin College, he walked on to the football team in the spring. The entire experience went by like a whirlwind, Patton said.

"Monday I found out I made the team, Tuesday I got my equipment, and Wednesday I was put up against Tommy Rees

and the Notre Dame offense," he said. "It was like drinking water through a firehose."

In spite of the rapid turn of events, Patton found himself welcomed by the team more than he ever imagined he would be.

"The first thing I saw was how close this team is, and how great each and every one of the guys is, and just how welcoming they are," Patton said. "For them, there is no 'scholarship' versus 'no-scholarship'. It was everything I could have imagined it being, not just because of the football, but because of the brotherhood of that football team that you hear so much about. As a fan, I'd heard it and kind of believed it, but when I saw it in real life it was everything and so much more."

From day one, Patton has embraced his role on the team.

"I'm there, and I'm whatever the team needs me to be," he said. "If that means I'm a cheerleader on the sideline waving my helmet around, I'm that. If that means I've got to be a tackling dummy, I'm that. If I've got to be on scout team defense, I'm that. Everyone has a role."

And although this is his only year as a member of the team, he is enjoying the special season the squad is having.

"This whole season has been

defined as doing it the Notre Dame way," he said. "Whether it's a last-second drive, whether it's grinding out a win, whether it's running the football and only throwing it a few times in a half, [Irish coach Brian Kelly] has really got this team to find an identity that fits Notre Dame, and I'm just so proud to have a small part of that."

Patton was quick to acknowledge the outpouring of support he received from his friends and family.

"I'm standing here as a culmination of a lot of people. I

wouldn't have been here without a whole army of people to help me fight on to get here," he said. "It's been an incredible honor just to put on the helmet, an incredible honor to run out of the tunnel, and I do it every day for my family, for my friends, and for those who always dreamed of going to Notre Dame. Because I'm living proof that if you want it, and if you work hard enough, your dreams really can come true."

Contact **Laura Coletti** at [lcoletti@nd.edu](mailto:lcoletti@nd.edu)



JULIE HERDER | The Observer

Senior defensive end Grant Patton runs onto the field before Notre Dame's 20-13 overtime win against Stanford on Oct. 13.





EILEEN VEIHMEYER | The Observer



EILEEN VEIHMEYER | The Observer

### DEACONS PASSING

The Irish have seen Wake Forest junior quarterback Tanner Price before. Last season, Price threw for 187 yards and a touchdown on efficient 17-for-24 passing in Notre Dame's 24-17 win on Nov. 5, 2011. The junior has thrown for 1,965 yards and 12 touchdowns, averaging just under 200 passing yards per game. In Wake Forest's 28-14 win over Boston College on Nov. 3, Price set a career high in completions and pass attempts, throwing for 293 yards and three kids on 39-for-57 passing.

After facing Boston College's do-it-all receiver Alex Amidon, Notre Dame will face another in redshirt junior slot receiver Michael Campanaro. Campanaro tied an ACC record with 16 receptions against Boston College, while adding three receiving touchdowns. Campanaro leads the ACC in receptions per game, with 8.1 and has 21 receptions in the last two games. Despite missing two games with a broken hand, the versatile slot receiver has six touchdowns and 618 yards and 65 receptions. In a 37-6 loss to N.C. State on Saturday, Campanaro even threw a touchdown for the Deacons' only score of the day.

The Deacons bring the 111th best offense in the country, averaging only 309.7 yards per game, into Notre Dame Stadium against the No. 1 scoring defense in the country. Notre Dame's defense gives up only 11.1 points per game and 295.2 yards per game. Only seven teams in the last 11 years have held opponents to less than 11.1 points per game. In a 21-6 win over Boston College on Saturday, senior linebacker Manti Te'o recorded his sixth interception of the year, the second most by a FBS linebacker in the last 11 years. Sophomore defensive end leads all underclassmen in the nation with 11 sacks, while junior linebacker Prince Shembo had three sacks against Boston College.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### DEACONS RUSHING

Redshirt junior running back Josh Harris leads the Deacons in rushing with 607 yards and five touchdowns on

136 carries. Backing up Harris is redshirt freshman Deandre Martin, who has rushed for 371 yards and five touchdowns on 394 carries. The duo each had a 100-yard rushing performance with four touchdowns between the two of them in a 49-37 win over Army on Sept. 22. But Wake Forest has one of the worst rushing offenses in the country, ranked 111th in the country with 102.7 rushing yards per game.

Meanwhile, Notre Dame has the sixth-best rushing defense in the country, giving up 95.9 rushing yards per game. Notre Dame has held four opponents to under 10 points and is the only team in the FBS to have not allowed a touchdown drive of longer than 95 yards. Against Boston College, the Irish allowed 53 yards rushing on 23 rushing attempts.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### DEACONS OFFENSIVE COACHING

Defensive coordinator Bob Diaco will have another pass-heavy offense to deal with, but stopping the running game shouldn't be too much of a problem for the Irish.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### DEACONS SPECIAL TEAMS

Notre Dame limited Boston College's electric return game to 18.7 yards per return. The Deacons rank 118th in the country in kick returns, averaging 16.5 yards per return. Redshirt freshman kicker Chad Hedlund replaced senior kicker Jimmy Newman and is 3-for-3 this year with a long of 44 yards.

**EDGE: EVEN**

### DEACONS SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	Liberty	W 20-17
Sept. 8	North Carolina	W 28-27
Sept. 15	@ Florida State	L 52-0
Sept. 22	Army	W 49-37
Sept. 29	Duke	L 34-27
Oct. 6	@ Maryland	L 19-14
Oct. 20	@ Virginia	W 16-10
Oct. 25	Clemson	L 42-13
Nov. 3	Boston College	W 28-14
Nov. 10	@ NC State	L 37-6
Nov. 17	@ Notre Dame	
Nov. 24	Vanderbilt	

# HEAD T

WAKE FOREST



WF

(R-Sr.) Terence Davis **81** WR  
(R-So.) Brandon Terry 86

(R-Fr.) Dylan Intemann **63** LT  
(R-Fr.) Hunter Goodwin 71

(R-Jr.) Josh Harris **25** RB  
(R-Fr.) Deandre Martin 21

(R-Jr.) Whit Barnes **60** LG  
(R-Sr.) Gabe Irby 79

(Jr.) Tanner Price **10** QB  
(R-Jr.) Brendan Cross 12

(R-Sr.) Garrick Williams **74** C  
(R-Fr.) Cody Preble 72

(Sr.) Tommy Bohanon **42** FB  
(R-So.) Jordan Garside 43

(R-Jr.) Frank Souza **75** RG  
(R-Sr.) Gabe Irby 79

(R-So.) Colin Summers **68** RT  
(R-Fr.) Hunter Goodwin 71

(R-Jr.) Spencer Bishop **89** TE  
(R-So.) Daniel Vogelsang 97

(R-Jr.) Michael Campanaro **3** WR  
(R-Sr.) Lovell Jackson 4

WF

(R-Sr.) Chibuikem Okoro **6** CB  
(R-So.) Merrill Noel 7

(Jr.) A.J. Marshall **17** FS  
(Sr.) Josh Strickland 18

(R-Jr.) Kris Redding **90** DE  
(Gr.) Hasan Hazine 96

(R-Sr.) Joey Ehrmann **40** OLB  
(R-Sr.) Derricus Ellis 49

(R-Jr.) Nikita Whitlock **50** NG  
(Fr.) Tylor Harris 36

(R-Jr.) Mike Olson **41** MLB  
(R-Fr.) Brandon Chubb 48

(R-Sr.) Riley Haynes **45** WLB  
(R-Sr.) Scott Betros 32

(R-Jr.) Zach Thompson **98** DE  
(R-Fr.) Desmond Floyd 94

(R-Jr.) Justin Jackson **39** OLB  
(R-So.) Zachary Allen 35

(R-Jr.) Daniel Mack **5** SS  
(Fr.) James Ward 23

(R-So.) Kevin Johnson **9** CB  
(R-Fr.) Allen Ramsey II 15

WF

(R-Fr.) Chad Hedlund **27** PK  
(Sr.) Jimmy Newman 82

(Sr.) Jimmy Newman **82** KO  
(R-Fr.) Chad Hedlund 27

(R-Fr.) Alexander Kinal **38** P  
(Sr.) Alex Wulfeck 24

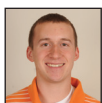
(R-Jr.) Josh Harris **25** KR  
(R-Fr.) Deandre Martin 21

(R-Sr.) Lovell Jackson **4** PR  
(R-Jr.) Michael Campanaro 3

(R-So.) Logan Feimster **52** LS  
(R-Jr.) Whit Barnes 60



Allan Joseph  
Editor-in-Chief



Andrew Owens  
Assistant Managing Editor



Chris Allen  
Sports Editor

Wake Forest isn't nearly as good as it was last year, but this isn't really about the Deacons. It's about a special senior class, led by a special linebacker, playing for one last special moment inside Notre Dame Stadium. There is absolutely zero chance that Manti Te'o and company let this moment pass them by.

Remember that 35-0 win over Nevada to open 2009? Seniors will get to savor the feeling of a big victory once more, and it'll bookend their Notre Dame Stadium memories.

This class started its career with a big win. It will end it that way, too. Students will join the team on the field in celebration of the best regular season since, yes, 1988. There will only be one thing left to do for these Irish — in the words of the cheers that will inevitably ring out Saturday: "beat SC."

11-0. No one could have expected it, but that's the lasting mark this senior class will give fans when it walks off the field and into the tunnel early Saturday evening. This group has already accomplished something incredibly special, but it will have the opportunity to do something extraordinarily and historically special in Los Angeles next week, and that's the pursuit of a perfect regular season.

But, first, Wake Forest. Notre Dame has proved no opponent can be overlooked on its home turf, but I don't see the Irish letting the Demon Deacons hang around this weekend. Not with so much on the line. Not in the final home contest of 2012.

Take a moment, especially you, seniors, to look around Saturday and soak in the moment and realize just how incredible this ride has been.

They came from all over the country, from New England to Hawaii. They united in South Bend. This season, they have led the resurgence of the Notre Dame program — and this weekend the seniors of the Class of 2013 take their curtain call.

Against a Wake Forest team that will struggle to match a charged Notre Dame roster, the seniors will display the skill that fans will miss next season. Manti Te'o will lead the defense and wreak havoc at linebacker one last time. Tyler Eifert will rise above the defensive secondary one last time. Theo Riddick and Cierre Wood will run with purpose one last time. The class that, decades from now, may be looked back upon as one that turned the fortunes of America's most storied program will win once more and move to 11-0.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 34, Wake Forest 10

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 38, Wake Forest 0

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 33, Wake Forest 13



# 10 HEAD



## NO. 3 NOTRE DAME



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

**CB 6 KeiVarae Russell** (Fr.)

43 Josh Atkinson (So.)

**OLB 13 Danny Spond** (Jr.)

30 Ben Council (So.)

**DE 89 Kapron Lewis-Moore** (Gr.)

91 Sheldon Day (Fr.)

**NG 9 Louis Nix** (Jr.)

96 Kona Schwenke (Jr.)

**DE 7 Stephon Tuitt** (So.)

69 Tony Springmann (So.)

**OLB 55 Prince Shembo** (Jr.)

11 Ishaq Williams (So.)

**CB 2 Bennett Jackson** (Jr.)

21 Jalen Brown (So.)



**WR 7 T.J. Jones** (Jr.)

10 DaVaris Daniels (Fr.)

**WR 9 Robby Toma** (Sr.)

2 Chris Brown (Fr.)

**RT 74 Christian Lombard** (Jr.)

64 Tate Nichols (Jr.)

**RG 57 Mike Golic Jr.** (Gr.)

51 Bruce Heggie (Jr.)

**C 52 Braxton Cave** (Gr.)

57 Mike Golic Jr. (Gr.)

**LG 66 Chris Watt** (Sr.)

65 Conor Hanratty (So.)

**LT 70 Zack Martin** (Sr.)

78 Ronnie Stanley (Fr.)

**TE 80 Tyler Eifert** (Sr.)

18 Beh Koyack (So.)

**WR 81 John Goodman** (Gr.)

87 Daniel Smith (Jr.)



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

40 Nick Tausch (Sr.)

**KR 4 George Atkinson** (So.)

6 Theo Riddick (Sr.)

**LS 60 Jordan Cowart** (Sr.)

61 Scott Daly (Fr.)

**PK 27 Kyle Brindza** (So.)

40 Nick Tausch (Sr.)

**P 35 Ben Turk** (Sr.)

27 Kyle Brindza (So.)

**PR 19 Davonte' Neal** (Fr.)

81 John Goodman (Gr.)



### IRISH PASSING

On Saturday, sophomore quarterback Everett Golson had one of his most efficient passing performances, throwing for 200 yards and two touchdowns on 16-for-24 passing. That makes two straight 200-yard games with two touchdowns for the first-year starter. Since the concussion he sustained in Notre Dame's 20-13 overtime win against Stanford on Oct. 13, Golson has thrown for over 600 yards, four touchdowns and only one interception in three games.

Golson is starting to develop a rapport with preseason All-American tight end Tyler Eifert. Eifert had six receptions for 67 yards in Notre Dame's 21-6 win over Boston College on Saturday. Eifert needs only five receptions for most receptions by a Notre Dame tight end. Eifert has 124 career receptions and 1,625 receiving yards. Sophomore tight end Troy Niklas caught his first career touchdown pass against the Eagles and senior receiver John Goodman added his second of the season. The Irish didn't come out of Boston unscathed, though. Notre Dame lost sophomore receiver DaVaris Daniels for the remainder of the regular season with a broken clavicle. Daniels had 375 receiving yards on 25 receptions before the injury.

Wake Forest enters the game with the 98th-best passing defense in the country, giving up 260.9 passing yards per game. The Deacons have a pair of dangerous cornerbacks in redshirt senior Chibuikem Okoro and redshirt sophomore Kevin Johnson. Johnson leads the team with three interceptions and 15 pass breakups. Johnson is also fifth on the team with 45 tackles.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### IRISH RUSHING

Last week against Boston College, the Irish rushed for 184 yards, led by senior running back Theo Riddick's 104 yards on 18 carries. That was Riddick's third 100-yard rushing performance of the season and his first since a 17-14 win against BYU on Oct. 20. Meanwhile, senior running back Cierre Wood

and sophomore running back George Atkinson combined for 42 yards on 10 total carries. The Irish had three drives of over four minutes, but also turned the ball over twice on fumbles by Riddick and Atkinson. Golson continued his rushing prowess, rushing for 39 yards on 10 attempts. Golson also scored the only rushing touchdown of the game on Notre Dame's 95-yard opening drive.

Wake Forest is in the middle of the pack in terms of rushing defense, ranked 63rd in the country giving up 156.9 rushing yards per game. Notre Dame ranks 33rd in the nation in rushing offense, averaging 198.7 rushing yards per game. In Saturday's 37-6 loss to N.C. State, the Deacons gave up 170 rushing yards.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

Irish coach Brian Kelly used the running game to establish long drives for Notre Dame, including one of over eight minutes. Kelly used Golson effectively as well, not turning the ball over and using deceptive run plays to push for first downs on third-and-long.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza didn't attempt a field goal against the Eagles on Saturday and the Irish punted only three times. Against N.C. State on Saturday, Wake Forest gave up a 100-yard kickoff return for a touchdown while Atkinson averaged 26 yards per kick return against Boston College.

**EDGE: NOTRE DAME**

### IRISH SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	vs. Navy	W 50-10
Sept. 8	Purdue	W 20-17
Sept. 15	@ Michigan State	W 20-3
Sept. 22	Michigan	W 13-6
Oct. 6	vs. Miami	W 41-3
Oct. 13	Stanford	W 20-13 (OT)
Oct. 20	BYU	W 17-14
Oct. 27	@ Oklahoma	W 30-13
Nov. 3	Pittsburgh	W 29-26 (3OT)
Nov. 10	@ Boston College	W 21-6
Nov. 17	Wake Forest	
Nov. 24	@ USC	



**Andrew Gastelum**  
Associate Sports Editor



**Matthew DeFranks**  
Associate Sports Editor

The Irish have been far from impressive at home. But while 10-0 looks awfully good to Brian Kelly and his players, 11-0 would look even better to a team that came into the year unranked with the toughest schedule in college football.

It's Senior Day and expect these seniors to go out with a bang. That means Tyler Eifert, Theo Riddick, almost the entire offensive line and especially Manti Te'o. Notre Dame is too focused to let this one slip away or get even remotely close and the team knows it needs style points to have any hope of making a case for the BCS National Championship.

Without a doubt, it will be Notre Dame's biggest home win this year and they will head to beautiful Los Angeles 11-0 with a chance to go undefeated. Who would've think it?

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 41, Wake Forest 6

It just would not be right if Manti Te'o, Kapron Lewis-Moore and Tyler Eifert lost in their final game at Notre Dame Stadium. Luckily for them, they welcome in a mediocre Wake Forest team, who clocks in at 5-5.

The Deacons are not terrible, but they're not very good either. Their secondary can be tough but Everett Golson has grown in the past few weeks, providing both clutch heroics and steady leadership. He has developed his running game as well, which complements Cierre Wood, Theo Riddick and George Atkinson.

Maybe the Irish will give the fans another home heart attack. Maybe they will blow out Wake Forest. But one thing is for sure, there is no way Manti, Kapron and Tyler fall in their final farewell to the House that Knute Built.

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 27, Wake Forest 10

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ZACK MARTIN | OT | INDIANAPOLIS

# Martin matures into vocal offensive leader

*In-state offensive line product anchors unit from left tackle, becomes model of consistency in protection*

By **SAM GANS**  
Sports Writer

The Notre Dame offense has been hot and cold all year — at times a well-oiled machine and at others a sputtering cog. Just make sure not to blame Zack Martin when things don't go well.

Martin, in his third year starting at left tackle for the No. 3 Irish, has been a model for consistency on Notre Dame's offensive line this season. Martin has allowed only one sack all season — on the season's opening drive against Navy — and frequently grades highly in offensive line coach Harry Hiestand's critiques of each individual lineman's performance.

"He's lapping the field. He's that good on a consistent basis," Irish coach Brian Kelly said of Martin in a press conference on Nov. 6. "I think [Hiestand] is grading him out in the 90s where guys are grading in the 60s and 70s. He's just a consistent player for us at a high level, and has been that way all year."

Hiestand's ratings are not simple evaluations, but rather look at all the aspects of offensive line play.

"Coach Hiestand is very thorough on his grading," Martin said. "He coaches your technique, your steps, your hands, your footwork and then he goes through if you're doing your job and if you block your man. So it's not just a check for this play, there's a few things for each play."

It's no surprise Martin, who will make his 37th career start on Senior Day against Wake

Forest, rates well. The 6-foot-4, 304-pound Indianapolis native was named Notre Dame's Guardian of the Year in both 2010 and 2011 as the top offensive lineman on the roster. In 2010, the Irish allowed 1.54 sacks per game, their fewest since 1998; in 2011, Notre Dame ran the ball for a 4.8 yards-per-carry average, its most since 1996. The Irish are just under that mark this season, at 4.78 yards per carry.

Martin's position on the line is of particular importance, as he protects sophomore quarterback Everett Golson's blind side, along with holding additional responsibilities.

"I think [a left tackle has] to be a balanced player," Martin said. "You have to be able to communicate to the rest of the line, because if you have something off the edge, you have to communicate it all the way down. You've got to be able to protect the speed rusher off the edge and then also you've got to be able to run block. So it's kind of a balanced position."

Despite success as an individual and as a unit and nearly three full seasons of experience, Martin says he is still improving as he accumulates more repetitions and corrects tendencies he notices need fixed in film study.

"I think I've improved more in awareness of the game and the more you can get in there and the more you can get reps and plays, that's where I've improved in the most, I think. I think [the consistency comes] through repetition and trying to get things right," Martin said. "It's the studying



ASHLEY DACY | The Observer

**Senior offensive tackle and captain Zack Martin prepares to block against Oklahoma on Oct. 27. Martin allowed a sack in Notre Dame's season opener against Navy but has not allowed one since.**

the game — that's the biggest thing. Offensive line play, everyone thinks it's a big, brutal game. But if you watch film and learn stuff, you can make yourself that much better of a player just by learning what little keys you pick up from film. That's something I've been able to do."

Martin's impact on the field has been substantial since his sophomore year, but his role increased this season when he was named one of four captains, along with Manti Te'o, Kapron Lewis-Moore and Tyler Eifert.

"People are looking to you offensively to kind of bring that spark and that leadership," Martin said. "I try to be the same guy every day and I know myself and the captains just try to be ourselves and try to get the team up a little bit every day."

That leadership ability is noticeable to teammates, including fellow senior and left guard Chris Watt, who has started alongside Martin for the past two years.

"Zack has been a really consistent player for us," Watt said. "Also, we both came in together, so I've been able to see his leadership abilities grow over time. Obviously he's a captain this year, and he's been an important leader for this team. He's done a great job."

Before attending Notre Dame, Martin played football at Bishop Chatard High School after his family moved to Indianapolis from Kansas City when he was eight years old. But, despite going

through the Catholic school system and living in Indiana, he was not a Notre Dame fan in his youth.

"I was never a Notre Dame fan growing up," Martin said. "I watched them occasionally but I wasn't a die-hard Notre Dame fan, but Indianapolis is a big Catholic community, big Notre Dame fans, so I have a lot of friends that are die-hards."

Martin grew up playing football with two brothers. One of them, Nick, is now a sophomore offensive lineman for the Irish. Playing on the same position unit creates a unique opportunity for increased bonding.

"I was very excited when he committed and decided to come to South Bend," Martin said. "It's been a great couple of years having him up here. We're enjoying the moment being up here together and having a good time."

Martin did not play his freshman year at Notre Dame and has a fifth year of eligibility for the 2013 season, should he wish to use it — but he also could enter the NFL Draft after this season. Martin said he has not decided yet.

"I'm going to wait until the end of the season and talk to coaches and parents," he said. "But right now I'm just trying to take it a game at a time and stay undefeated."

It's that focus on this season that is currently driving him, as the Irish have three games left, including the regular-season finale at USC.

The trip to Los Angeles will likely rekindle memories for

Martin, who started in the 20-16 win over the Trojans in 2010, Notre Dame's first win over USC since 2001. Martin said that experience was one of his favorite during his time in South Bend when he looks back.

"My first year playing out at USC was probably the first [memory] that comes to mind, because our season was kind of down a little bit and then we went out and had a big win in the Coliseum," he said. "It was a lot of fun."

The 10-0 start is something new for the Irish players, as none of them have been on a Notre Dame team that had less than five losses until this year. Martin said a potential reason why is the team's performance in practice has noticeably improved.

"We've done a pretty good job this year in coming out and being ready to practice, so I don't know if that's the fact we're winning or that we have a group of guys that can get up and actually enjoy practicing with their teammates," he said.

Ultimately, Martin said it's critical for the Irish to approach games with a "play to win" attitude, rather than one not to lose.

"The mentality of the team is that we're undefeated, we have to go out there and we know we have to work," he said.

If the season up to this point is any indication, that won't be a problem for No. 70.



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

**Senior offensive tackle Zack Martin blocks during Notre Dame's 50-10 win over Navy on Sept. 1. Martin has started every game in 2012.**

Contact Sam Gans at [sgans@nd.edu](mailto:sgans@nd.edu)



DAN MCCARTHY | S | YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

# McCarthy follows in his brothers' footsteps

By KEVIN NOONAN  
Sports Writer

Irish graduate student safety Dan McCarthy is a family man — and his family is a Notre Dame family that bleeds blue and gold through and through.

He is the third of his brothers to attend Notre Dame, and his older brother Kyle was in his senior year as a safety and for the Irish football team when Dan came in as a freshman.

But the family roots go deeper than just this generation, and McCarthy pays homage to this history every time he puts on his jersey.

"My grandfather went here and played sports here, and I wear 15 because that's what my grandpa wore," McCarthy said.

McCarthy came to Notre Dame as a freshman after a successful high school career that saw him named Gatorade Player of the Year in Ohio, a second-team USA Today All-American and offensive player of the year for his division by the Associated Press.

That high school success didn't immediately translate into college success, as McCarthy sat out his freshman season, and then

struggled to gain playing time his next two seasons.

McCarthy played in 12 of the 13 games of the 2011 season, primarily making his impact on special teams, and finished the season tied for fifth for the Irish in special teams tackles. He has continued to see playing time on special teams and as a reserve safety this season.

But the experience of playing for the Irish is one that McCarthy cherishes for more than just playing time.

"Being an Irish Catholic, it's been my dream my whole life," McCarthy said. "We have pictures of my brother and I in front of Touchdown Jesus from when we were five years old. You know just with memories like that, being able to make that a dream come true has just been amazing and been a great ride."

McCarthy, who completed his degree in finance in May and is currently in graduate studies, remembers what it was like to come in as a freshman and have a ready-made mentor in his brother to look up to.

"[Playing with my brother] was awesome, he was always there as a leadership role for me. He set a great example on and off the

field and it was also great to just be here and hang out with him. That was a very neat experience," McCarthy said.

And now that he is an elder member of the team, McCarthy sees himself filling a similar role for the younger players in his own way.

"You know it's kind of funny, you take on the role of kind of guiding those guys," McCarthy said. "It's pretty cool because you've been there and you know what to expect and you kind of let them know what to expect, and tell them to just keep working and it's fun watching them."

Even since his high school days as a football star at Cardinal Mooney in Youngstown, Ohio, McCarthy has been actively involved in areas outside of football. He was a member of the National Honor Society in high school, and served on his school's student council for all four years.

That involvement carried over to Notre Dame. He is engrained enough in the business school to be able to repeat the party line on cue — "I graduated with a finance degree from the business school, and you know Notre Dame has the No. 1 business school."



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Graduate student safety Dan McCarthy, pictured during 2012 spring practice, is the third McCarthy brother to attend Notre Dame.

Outside of the classroom, McCarthy is an avid fisher and a member of Notre Dame's fishing club.

"I'm trying to get out on the lake to try to beat my record of an eight-and-a-half pound bass last spring," McCarthy said. "That's something that I love to do here and hopefully we can continue to grow the Notre Dame fishing club."

The future is uncertain according to McCarthy, but wherever he goes, he'll bring with him his attitude and playing style (and a finance degree from the No. 1 business school in the country).

"I just play every play like it's your last, just leave it all out there," McCarthy said.

Contact Kevin Noonan at [knoonan2@nd.edu](mailto:knoonan2@nd.edu)

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ZEKE MOTTA | S | VERO BEACH, FLA.

# Motta leads young Irish secondary

*Safety has been a model of consistency, playing in every Notre Dame game since 2009*

By **MATTHEW DeFRANKS**  
Associate Sports Editor

Through four years, three roles and two coaches, one thing has stayed the same for Irish senior safety Zeke Motta — his presence.

The Vero Beach, Fla., native has played in all 48 games during his time at Notre Dame, a streak that dates back to his first game in his freshman season when Charlie Weis was Notre Dame's coach.

As a freshman, Motta contributed mainly as a special teams player but also shifted between outside linebacker, which he played in high school, and safety. He earned his first start at safety against Michigan in 2010, when he recorded four tackles.

Motta said he has grown significantly in two years.

"I've taken leaps from where I was two years ago," he said. "From last year, obviously, a lot more comfortable and confident out on the field and that helps with being able to play fast and really dominate your opponent."

The 6-foot-2, 215-pound safety was a heavily recruited linebacker in the football-crazy state of Florida. He was named to the U.S. Army All-American Bowl and also was ranked inside the Rivals 100. He enrolled early and has been a mainstay on the Irish defense.

This season, Motta has taken on a new role as the elder statesman of a young and inexperienced secondary.

Entering this season, the defensive backfield appeared to be the weakest link of the Irish defense. After injuries to junior safety Austin Collinsworth, junior cornerback Lo Wood and graduate student safety Jamoris Slaughter, a depleted secondary was forced to start two converted receivers and a freshman cornerback.

"For multiple reasons, it was going to be a rebuilding year in the secondary anyway and then a few other poorly timed events happened that created an even more inexperienced secondary," Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco said on Sept. 26.

Motta has stepped into the role of teacher and mentor for junior cornerback Bennett Jackson, sophomore safety Matthias Farley and freshman cornerback KeiVarae Russell.

"I don't think we can underestimate what he's done back there for us," Irish coach Brian Kelly said. "He's an integral part of our defense."

The secondary has helped the Irish allow less than 200 passing yards per game and just six touchdowns through the air this year. The Irish defense is the top-ranked scoring defense in the nation, allowing 11.1 points per game.

Motta was named one of 15 semifinalists for the Thorpe



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

**Senior safety Zeke Motta makes a tackle during Notre Dame's 50-10 win against Navy on Sept. 1 at Aviva Stadium in Dublin. Motta already has a career-high 52 tackles this season with two games left to play.**

Award, an honor given to the top defensive back in the country.

"Zeke Motta is hungry and interested in being the very best safety in America, he may very well be," Diaco said. "He's well on his way."

Diaco said Motta has directed his attention to being the best football player he can be.

"I'm sure he's a wonderful son and a heck of a friend and a strong student," Diaco said. "But he's basically focused most of his energy on becoming the very best player he can be. He comes to practice like game day. There's no moment of football preparation where he's not at 100 percent, at 100 miles per hour, all the energy he has."

There is not a time that Motta is not trying to improve, Diaco said.

"Walkthrough, meetings, watching tape on his own, at practice, shorts practice, articulated work, scouted work. He's just working on his game constantly and it's paying off," he said.

Through 10 games, the industrial design major has already surpassed his previous season-high in tackles with 52. He is tied for second in tackles on the team, behind only senior linebacker Manti Te'o.

Motta — who described his game as "physical, fast, tough, crazy and wild" — said his best football moment came during last year's Champs Sports Bowl against Florida State, when he returned a fumble 29 yards for a touchdown. The score gave the Irish an early 7-0 lead but the Seminoles came back to win 18-14.

"That's probably the biggest play I've had," Motta said. "Unfortunately, we lost that game so it wasn't that good."

Motta enters his final home game with the third most career tackles of current Irish players, trailing Te'o and graduate

student defensive lineman Kapron Lewis-Moore.

Motta, though, wants to be remembered as a well-rounded person.

"I'd like to be remembered as a dominant predator on the field and a kind-hearted gentleman off the field and somebody's who's a firm believer in God," he said. "I try to do everything right all the time. I'm a firm believer in God. I treat each day as a new

day to get better and tomorrow is never guaranteed."

Motta could not pinpoint one item as his favorite thing about Notre Dame.

"The best thing I like about being at Notre Dame is probably a combination of a lot of things. Obviously, you have a beautiful campus with Mother Mary, Touchdown Jesus and the Basilica.

"When you take a step back

and look at that, there's really no other place in America that has that nostalgic feel to it. Being around my brothers this year, being a senior, having spent four years growing with these guys, it's pretty special. The people I've met and the games I've been able to play in, it's been a wonderful opportunity."

Contact Matthew DeFranks at [mdefrank@nd.edu](mailto:mdefrank@nd.edu)

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<b>MEDIUM &amp; SIDE</b> <b>\$9.99</b> One Medium One Topping & Garlic Parmesan Breadsticks <small>PAPA JOHN'S Online Promo Code: SVM3</small>	<b>LUNCH BOX</b> <b>\$5.00</b> 8" One Topping Pizza & 20oz Pepsi Product <small>PAPA JOHN'S Min. purchase of \$8 required for delivery</small>	<b>THE LEPRECHAUN</b> <b>\$9.99</b> Two 8" One Topping & Breadsticks <small>PAPA JOHN'S Online Promo Code: SVM7</small>

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THEO RIDDICK | RB | MANVILLE, N.J.

# Riddick shows versatility in four years

*Senior running back moves to receiver and back, succeeding at each position*

By CHRIS ALLEN  
Sports Editor

Theo Riddick has taken a lot of steps in his career.

His steps past, through and over defenders have earned him 966 rushing yards, 1,166 receiving yards and 1,050 return yards in his four-year career in an Irish uniform. But with his first step on campus as a Notre Dame student, Riddick achieved something far more important.

"I'm the first person from my family to go to college," the senior Riddick said. "I wanted to really do something big with my college choice. I wanted to leave home for once, you know. I wanted to do something different that my family never had the opportunity to do. I went big and chose to come to Notre Dame."

## Mr. Versatility

In his four years in an Irish uniform, the versatile Riddick from Manville, N.J., has performed in almost every skill position role on offense and special teams. In addition to his primary duties as a tough, all-around running back, Riddick has returned kicks and punts, played two years as a slot receiver and has even thrown a few lead blocks for his fellow backs. Riddick said the flexibility in positions has always come naturally.

"I would say I definitely saw that I had the abilities to do a lot in terms of catching the ball and running the ball," Riddick said. "Coming here to Notre Dame, the coaches just enhanced my abilities in those areas. ... I can catch the ball, I can run it, I can come in and be a power back.



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

*Senior running back Theo Riddick celebrates after scoring the final Irish touchdown in Notre Dame's 30-13 win over No. 8 Oklahoma in Norman, Okla. Riddick has rushed for 714 yards and four touchdowns this season.*

I'm very versatile."

In 2009, with former Irish head coach Charlie Weis at the helm, Riddick had the opportunity to contribute immediately as a freshman kick returner. Riddick's open-field elusiveness and quickness down the field — traits that made him one of the top recruits in New Jersey in the 2009 recruiting class — made a big impact on the Irish special teams. His 849 return yards were the most in a single season by an Irish player in program history, breaking a record then held by one of Riddick's mentors: former Irish running back Armando Allen. Riddick said he learned on special teams and waited his turn on offense.

"Returning kicks just helped me, in some ways, just to realize

the speed of the game," he said. "Beyond that, I don't think it helped too much as a running back or wide receiver."

Before Riddick could make that move onto the first-team offense, the Irish program had to undergo a seismic change. Riddick said the firing of Weis and the hiring of current coach Brian Kelly was a challenge as a young player.

"It was a tough time," Riddick said. "Being a freshman and coming into an environment like that was shocking, and it was tough. But we've bounced back and overcome a lot, and look at where we are today."

One of the first positional changes Kelly made on the offensive side of the ball was to move Riddick to slot receiver to

take advantage of his open-field ability in space in the spread offense. Riddick said the move required a mental adjustment.

"It was a huge transition," he said. "I had never played wide receiver before. Luckily we had a great receiver in [former Irish receiver Michael] Floyd here. He taught me more than a few things."

After playing the whole 2010 season and much of 2011 at the slot position, Riddick returned to his original position of running back after a late injury to former Irish running back Jonas Gray. Since that injury, Riddick has become the most consistent and dependable Irish running back. Through 10 games of the 2012 season, Riddick leads Notre Dame in rushing with 714 yards on the ground. The senior said his time as a wide-out improved some facets of his game as a running back.

"That time as a wide receiver definitely helped me now that I'm a running back again," Riddick said. "I can read coverages and I can predict where people are going to be in the pre-snap. Definitely, that all enhanced my game."

Though he has traveled from the bottom of the running back depth chart to the slot receiver position and back to be the lead Irish running back, Riddick said he does not care about his individual standing in the backfield.

"It really means nothing whether or not I'm the top guy," he said. "I just want to win and be a part of wins. I'll do anything to help this team do that. I'm just happy to be a part of success."

## The joker

Though he has earned a reputation as a tough and intimidating between-the-tackles runner

on the field, off the field Riddick finds his passion in humor and having fun — a trait that might be traced back to his notorious freshman-year dorm.

"I lived in Zahm when I stayed on campus," Riddick said. "What can I say? They're always rowdy, from Wednesday till Sunday. The guys in Zahm never sleep."

Riddick has carried that humorous spirit into his long friendship with fellow senior running back Cierre Wood. Though the two seniors compete for carries in the backfield, their friendship has never wavered.

"I don't think my relationship with Cierre has ever really changed at all," Riddick said. "It's always been a real tight bond on and off the field. From day one, we just clicked. I'm just really happy to be here with him."

Riddick and Wood have worked hard to earn a reputation as practical jokesters among teammates in the Irish locker room. This penchant for jokes reached a boiling point this season, when Riddick and Wood shared a house with senior defensive end Tyler Stockton — also a notorious comedian.

"If I could record our house, man, I think everyone in South Bend would watch," Riddick said. "We like to make jokes, do some pranks, it gets a little bit wild. It happens at all hours of the night. It doesn't matter if it's 2 a.m., you better lock your door in our house or someone will mess with you."

While Wood and Stockton make up Riddick's Notre Dame family, it is his commitment to make his true family proud, as the first member of his family to pursue a college degree. Riddick said he will share his career at Notre Dame on Senior Day with a very special family member.

"I get to see my twin sister. ... Her name is Thea," he said. "She doesn't go to school, she's back at home but I keep in touch with her on a daily basis. We're twins, so I mean, we did everything together. She didn't play football, but she was a cheerleader. If I did some things wrong, you know, she let me know about it. She was like another coach out there."

While Riddick will walk off the field at Notre Dame Stadium against Wake Forest as one of the more versatile offensive players to don the Irish uniform, it is his trademark toughness that he hopes leaves an impact on future players.

"I just want to be remembered as someone that never quit, regardless of the circumstances."



SARAH O'CONNOR | The Observer

*Senior running back Theo Riddick looks to make a move in the open field during Notre Dame's 20-13 overtime win against Stanford on Oct. 13 at Notre Dame Stadium. Riddick rushed for 45 yards on 12 carries.*

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CHRIS SALVI | S | LAKE FOREST, ILL.

# Safety earns scholarship in final season



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior safety Chris Salvi attempts to make a tackle during Notre Dame's 50-10 win over Navy on Sept. 1 in Dublin.

By NICOLE MICHELS  
Sports Writer

For most people, simply playing football at the collegiate level is a dream come true. Driven to challenge himself, graduate student safety Chris Salvi wanted more — he wanted to play football as a student-athlete at Notre Dame.

As his final home game quickly approaches, the former walk-on Salvi will conclude his senior year at Notre Dame as a scholarship player who saw playing time on special teams and at safety. Earning a full scholarship for his senior year was the fulfillment of a lifelong dream, Salvi said.

"Being able to get a scholarship is a great honor: there are

only 80-some kids who get one, and [Notre Dame] is such a great school, such a great football program," Salvi said. "This was something that I wanted for a long time; it took an extra four years but it happened. I guess that could be a lesson to people who get discouraged: don't give up."

Salvi began his collegiate football career at Butler University, where he played in all of the team's 11 games during his freshman season in 2008.

The 5-foot-10 native of Lake Forest, Ill., applied as a transfer student to Notre Dame, leaving a guaranteed roster spot on Butler's football team in the fall of 2009. Salvi said he also transferred because he felt driven to challenge

himself.

"What motivated me was testing myself — at least my football abilities — and also being able to attend such a great academic institution," Salvi said.

After receiving his acceptance to Notre Dame, Salvi contacted the football coordinator to ask for a tryout, only to endure a period of uncertainty while he waited for a response.

"They don't get back to you right away, which is understandable because they have a lot to do," Salvi said. "You just have to be relentless with getting in contact with them — I eventually did, and got a tryout. A week later I was on the team."

Due to NCAA regulations, Salvi sat out his sophomore season and started playing the next year. Joining the team as a walk-on proved challenging, but his hard work on the practice squad eventually earned him recognition and a spot on special teams, where he contributed on the kick-off and kick-return teams.

Salvi played in all 32 games to date. Salvi recorded some particularly critical plays on special teams, including a memorable block during Notre Dame's game in 2011 against a 15th-ranked Michigan State that allowed George Atkinson to return a kick-off for a touchdown.

Salvi took out two players at the Notre Dame 25-yard line with one block, allowing Atkinson to make a 89-yard touchdown run. Still, Salvi said one of his most memorable

moment in his football career came a few games earlier.

"The best memories I've had this season, but I would say that my favorite [individual] memory probably was my first tackle that I got when I was a junior against Pittsburgh," Salvi said.

For the Notre Dame-Navy game Oct. 29, 2011, Salvi was named a game day captain for the Irish. He said serving as one of the team's gameday captains against Navy might be his best memory of his entire football career, even over the Michigan State block or his first tackle.

"That might be my best memory, actually ... because it's such a great honor that the coaches gave me, even more than the scholarship," Salvi said. "Only so many guys get to be game day captain — even less than the number of scholarships on the team — so being game day captain is one of the best moments of my football career."

Salvi said his closest bond is with his brother Will Salvi, a senior walk-on cornerback.

"I'm sure any guy on the team who has a brother would very much like their brother to be on the team with them — I'm sure the Atkinsons and the Martins can attest to that," Salvi said. "Growing up together, we know each other better than anyone else, and it's a lot of fun to be able to go through something difficult with a sibling ... it's that much more rewarding and you get to know them in a

different way."

Through the name on the front of his jersey and his position on the field have changed throughout his football career, for Salvi playing football is a return to the game he loved growing up.

"I've always had the same approaches, no real differences," Salvi said. "I like to think that I've played this game the same way since I've been a little kid: as hard as I can and trying to have fun."

In last year's offseason, Salvi competed in the Bengal Bouts boxing tournament and was the champion of the 188-pound division. Though he plans to compete again this year, for now he said his focus is entirely on relishing his final collegiate football games.

"I'm going to miss my teammates and being able to legally hit people," Salvi said. "It's an outlet for frustration, when you start practice or a game you think about nothing else which is awesome — everyone should have something like that in their life."

To future football players thinking about trying out for the team, Salvi had one piece of advice: Go for it.

"It's going to be a tougher road throughout college, but it's going to be worth it," Salvi said. "Don't get discouraged, believe in yourself, keep confident and don't be afraid to go for it."

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WILL SALVI | CB | LAKE FOREST, ILL.

# Salvi cherishes time on field with older brother

By PETER STEINER  
Sports Writer

Roughly one year ago, senior Will Salvi caught the winning touchdown pass in a come-from-behind win in Notre Dame Stadium.

This year, Salvi will be on the field Saturday with a gold helmet on his head, instead of playing for the interhall football championship Sunday, like he did last year.

As part of the 2011 Dillon interhall football championship team, last year's game in Notre Dame Stadium represents more than taking home the interhall crown. It also marks the moment when Salvi decided he would try to walk on to the Notre Dame football team.

"Actually, before the championship game in interhall, I was talking to my brother and I decided that I think I could walk on and I want to join the team," Salvi said. "I just wanted to be with him and part of the team. It was a good decision on my part to try out."

After a successful tryout, Salvi made the football team during his junior year. Despite his and his team's achievements in interhall football, playing for Notre Dame

just doesn't compare to the dorm team, he said.

"Interhall was a lot of fun, but this is just so much more special and so much more intense and competitive, which just makes it great," Salvi said.

When he made the team, Salvi joined his brother Chris Salvi — a senior safety who transferred from Butler and made the Notre Dame football team in 2009. Although they have only had one year together on the team, Salvi — also a transfer from Alabama — identified playing with his brother as the most meaningful aspect of his Notre Dame football experience.

"I've always loved Notre Dame," Salvi said. "And the fact that Chris made the team as soon as he transferred here ... was surreal as is. Then when I decided to try out and when I got on the team, it was just a dream come true, being with him. It's the most fun I've had and some of the best experiences have come from this year."

Outside of playing with his brother, the first two football games this year highlight the most meaningful times Salvi has had while on the team.

"The Ireland trip as a whole,

especially when I knew that the game time was close, was pretty sweet," he said. "Then running out onto the field in Purdue was pretty awesome as well. Obviously, it was my first home game and you could feel the energy of the crowd and being with my brother was just so special. Being able to run out of the tunnel with him on something we've held to hearts so dearly is just pretty great."

This moment was particularly special because of the large role Notre Dame has played in his life, Salvi said.

"Just always being Notre Dame fans was a big deal for us because we just grew up with it," Salvi said. "My dad went here and showed us how awesome Notre Dame football was and how special the University is. Notre Dame football has always been an important part of our lives."

But playing for Notre Dame has been significant for more reasons than playing for his boyhood-favorite team with his brother. This year has also taught him many valuable lessons and life-skills he will take into the future, Salvi said.

"I've learned a lot from football that I didn't necessarily learn from the classroom," Salvi said.

"Competing with the best athletes in the world, obviously I have a disadvantage because I was out of football for a little bit and athletically, I'm probably not as supreme as Tyler Eifert or Manti Teo. I've tried to hold my own and obviously working hard is a huge part of this."

As a political science major, Salvi also has to balance schoolwork and playing football. He said the biggest change has been the decrease in free time outside the classroom.

"As a student, you have so

much time and I didn't realize that until I joined the team," Salvi said. "There's definitely a limited amount of time to do work, but you just have to manage it well. It's not too bad."

While Salvi is undecided on what he would like to do after this year is complete, one thing is certain. The decision to walk on the Notre Dame football team one year ago has paid off with an amazing experience.

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SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior cornerback Will Salvi prepares to run onto the field before Notre Dame's season opener against Navy in Ireland on Sept. 1.



JAMORIS SLAUGHTER | S | STONE MOUNTAIN, GA.

# Slaughter leads despite season-ending injury

*Fifth-year safety leads young secondary from sidelines after versatile career at multiple positions*

By **MIKE MONACO**  
Sports Writer

It all started with his mother, and it's been a family affair ever since.

Roughly six years ago and 700 miles away, Debbie Garrett convinced her son, Irish graduate student safety Jamoris Slaughter, to consider attending Notre Dame.

Slaughter, a native of Stone Mountain, Ga., had focused on southern schools during his recruitment until Garrett floated out an idea that he had yet to entertain.

"I could put all that solely on my mom," Slaughter said of ending up at Notre Dame. "I didn't know much about Notre Dame. I was SEC-bred and all I thought about was the SEC and all those southern teams but my mom was the one who always cared about education. She always wanted me and my little brother to strive to do better and always reach our potential."

"When I took the visit to Notre Dame I just saw all the opportunities educationally for me and my future and my family. I just thought it was a great situation that you could play football and go to a great university and kill two birds with one stone."

Slaughter, ranked as the 86th-best recruit in the class of 2008 by ESPN, committed to the Irish in June 2007 at his mother's behest. The 6-foot, 200-pound defensive back joined a secondary stocked with future NFL talent, including defensive backs Raeshon McNeil, Terrail Lambert, Robert Blanton, Sergio Brown, David Bruton, Kyle McCarthy and Harrison Smith. Slaughter credited the upperclassmen with serving as his "big brothers" while he adjusted to the collegiate level.

"Raeshon McNeil [was a big brother to me]," Slaughter said. "He played corner when I first came in. He was a really smart guy. He really understood football and the defense. I think when you come out of high school you don't really understand football on the college level so he was a major factor. And Kyle McCarthy and David Bruton [also helped] as well."

They all played [defensive back] so I was always hanging around them and they always showed me the ropes."

Slaughter used his freshman campaign to learn from his upperclassmen brothers as he redshirted. In 2009, Slaughter appeared in all 12 games as a sophomore for the Irish and tallied 14 tackles. As a junior in 2010 under first-year coach Brian Kelly, Slaughter transitioned to safety and made five starts in the secondary.

Slaughter played in all 13 games as a senior last season, making 10 starts. In the Champs Sports Bowl against Florida State, the hard-hitting Slaughter moved into a hybrid outside linebacker role in which he excelled, racking up five tackles and the first two sacks of his career against the Seminoles.

Slaughter said he has been comfortable shifting around the defensive lineup as long as he is still a playmaker.

"My mindset when I was asked to play different positions — and at first I just wanted to play safety — is sometimes when you're asked to do something I look at it as a challenge, like 'Can I do that?'" Slaughter said. "And I just went all in and I really put in the time and the study to understand the positions that I had to play, because I played numerous positions last year. It just all started to make sense for me and I just wanted to make plays."

The versatile defender was granted a fifth year of eligibility by the NCAA on March 20 and was expected to lead a youthful secondary in 2012 that was green after the graduations of Blanton, Smith and cornerback Gary Gray. But Slaughter's time as the on-field leader of the young secondary was short-lived.

Slaughter tore his Achilles tendon on the first play of the second half of Notre Dame's 20-3 victory over Michigan State on Sept. 15. The injury required surgery and ended Slaughter's season in shocking fashion.

"It's real hard to deal with," Slaughter said of the injury. "I've been trying to stay positive and look at things on the positive side because if you don't it will



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

**Graduate student Jamoris Slaughter wraps up Michigan State running back Le'Veon Bell on Sept. 15. Slaughter left the game against the Spartans with a season-ending Achilles injury,**

drive you crazy. I really just have been thinking about everything I have to do to get back and that's really just carried me through this whole season. I've still had a smile on my face and helped out the younger guys. My knowledge and my assistance can really help them out and it's been showing on the field."

The young secondary has benefited from Slaughter's coaching expertise. Along with senior safety Zeke Motta, junior cornerback Bennett Jackson, sophomore safety Matthias Farley and freshman cornerback KeiVarae Russell have powered a defensive backfield that is ranked 11th in the nation in passing efficiency defense. Slaughter said he has made it a point to stay involved with the secondary.

"I still watch film with Matthias and Zeke and still coach up the younger guys like I'm still out there on the field," Slaughter said. "They really appreciate that because at first when I got hurt I just wanted to shut down. I didn't want to do anything because it was just a shock to me that I got an injury and I knew I was going to be out for the whole year. But it was something that I told myself I was going to keep doing because I knew it was one of the right things to do."

Slaughter, as he has become the elder statesman of the secondary from the sidelines, said he thinks he has especially helped the younger players, just as former teammates like McNeil, McCarthy and Bruton advised him.

"I always want to see the success of my teammates, especially the young guys," Slaughter said.

"I remember when I came in, when you've got somebody older than you that understands and has been through what you've been through and they can sit and talk to you and help you understand things, it shows they really care and it really helps. So I think with me doing that with the younger guys they really appreciate that. They always say 'Thanks Slaughter' for helping with me out with this or that."

Slaughter has taken an especially keen interest in mentoring the rookie Russell, who has thrived as a starter since converting from running back to cornerback.

"I look at him as my little brother and he looks at me like I'm the big brother," Slaughter said of their relationship. "When he first got in, he played [running back] and switched to [defensive back] and now he's starting. That's crazy. I'm thinking when I was a freshman I was all nervous and he has the poise of a senior so I think he's going to be a great player. As time goes by he's going to get better each year."

Slaughter may end up playing alongside Russell once more. The safety has applied to the NCAA for a sixth year of eligibility and is awaiting a decision.

"I'm just waiting for the word," Slaughter said. "If I get the sixth [year], I probably will come back and if not I'll be trying to get to the NFL."

Slaughter said he knows the injury has hampered his NFL prospects, but he is willing to put in the hard work to achieve his longtime dream.

"The thing with me is I knew if I stayed healthy I knew I would

get [to the NFL]," Slaughter said. "It wasn't about making plays or anything. I knew if I stayed healthy, I'd be fine. When I took that injury this year it kind of set me back but I'm a very hard worker and when it comes to something I want, I always put in the time and the hours. So don't count me out yet."

Whenever Slaughter does make the leap to the professional ranks, he will be doing it with a new perspective on earning a living. On March 19, Slaughter's girlfriend Jasmine Torres gave birth to Santana Ryan Slaughter. With roughly eight months under his belt as a father, Slaughter has learned how to lead a family different than the Irish secondary.

"[Santana's birth] has definitely brought a lot of things in perspective just about life in general, about family," Slaughter said. "When you've got somebody that depends on you for everything, you really have to think about the decisions you make and how it could affect you or your family. So it's definitely made me into a better man."

Slaughter said his son's birth has also made him a better teammate, as he leads his younger teammates as a father figure and an older brother.

"I've always cared about my teammates, but I feel like when you have a son — I know a lot of people don't have kids in college — it just turns a switch on inside you and makes you care about things a little bit more," Slaughter said.

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TYLER STOCKTON | NG | LINWOOD, N.J.

# Stockton succeeds in school, plans on MBA

By **TORI ROECK**  
Sports Writer

Senior nose guard Tyler Stockton is an academic leader for his teammates. A marketing major, Stockton said he enjoys schoolwork and hopes to instill intellectual curiosity in the younger players.

"Working is something I love to do. It's something I've been doing all my life, and I've never stopped doing it," Stockton said. "That's what I want to show the younger kids."

When he was a freshman, Stockton said the upperclassmen mentored him through adjusting to college, which inspired him to do the same for others.

"When I came in, there was always someone there to help me with school, tell me the right way to study and how to be a good person on and off the field, always doing the right thing," he said. "Looking back now, that's what I want to contribute, just being a leader for the younger kids, making sure everybody's on time, making sure everybody's working hard, nobody's messing around, everybody's focused."

Stockton said he hopes his academic journey can serve as a good example for his

teammates.

"Coming in, it was hard for me with school, so now it's like school's easy for me," he said. "I need to show [younger players] what it took for me to better myself academically here so they're not going to struggle as they get older."

Stockton said he chose to attend Notre Dame because of the academic quality of the university.

"I decided to come here because I knew that football wouldn't last forever," he said. "I knew that coming to Notre Dame I would get the best degree, meet some of the best people possible and live a great life after football and after school here."

The Notre Dame network was also appealing to Stockton, and he said alumni have been very generous to him.

"Whatever literally you want to do, there's someone that's willing to help you, someone that's willing to show you the ropes," he said. "I only have two weeks off [in the summer] and people are willing to say, 'Come to my office for two or three weeks and I'll show you what I do.' People want to help you out just because you're a Notre Dame student, and there's a big network out there so you can

go pretty much wherever you want."

Being a marketing major was an easy choice for Stockton because he said he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father, who served as executive vice president of marketing at Kerzner International Resorts.

"As soon as I got into college, I knew that I wanted to do something similar to him," he said.

So far, Stockton said he has had internships at Morgan Stanley and hopes to enter an MBA program after graduation.

Stockton's life isn't consumed only by homework and football. He said he enjoys bowling, soaking up the Notre Dame experience and especially video games.

"I'm the greatest at all video games," he said. "You can ask anybody that."

In his downtime, Stockton said he also enjoys hanging out with his teammates who have formed a very close-knit group.

"We've always been close since day one, our class. It starts with our coaches," he said. "They're a close group as well. [Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco] instills stuff into us every day, like to better ourselves, have a lot of energy and give a lot of effort. Everyone is out there fighting for each other



SARAH O'CONNOR | The Observer

**Senior nose guard Tyler Stockton yells to the sideline during Notre Dame's 37-14 loss to No. 16 Stanford on Sept. 25, 2010.**

and doesn't want to mess up for all their brothers."

Stockton said having to leave Notre Dame after graduation will be difficult for him, but he knows his education has prepared him to do great things.

"It was an unreal experience and something I'll never forget," he said. "It was totally worth it coming here, and I hope kids

make the right decision when they go through recruiting because [football] is not going to last forever, so you're going to have to figure out something else to do with your life. This school's going to set you up for that."

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MATT TANSEY | OL | BERKELEY HEIGHTS, N.J.

# Tansey to leave football, become pilot

By **CHRIS ALLEN**  
Sports Editor

It was Oct. 17, and then 6-0 Notre Dame was preparing for a home game against BYU. Before a customary Wednesday practice, Notre Dame senior offensive lineman Matt Tansey received a phone call he will never forget from Captain Earl Carter of the United States Navy. The news was simple — Tansey

would head to Pensacola, Fla., after graduation to train as a Navy pilot.

"Normally, they would call us in one at a time to tell us our assignments, but because it was fall break and people were all over they called us instead," Tansey said. "I was in the Gug, just got out of a morning lift. We had practice in about two hours. So I got the call from our [commanding officer] Captain

Carter, and he told me — deadpan as ever — you're going to be a student Naval aviator. You're going to train to be a pilot."

For Tansey, the only player on the Notre Dame roster who also trains in Notre Dame's highly-regarded ROTC program, the call was a culmination of four years of discipline and hard work. He shared the moment with his parents — and his Notre Dame football family.

"As soon as I got off the phone, I called my mom and my dad. It was almost the same feeling from them that they had when I got the call about getting into Notre Dame," Tansey said. "I told some of the guys on the team. It was just the greatest feeling in the world. That day at practice I could barely focus, just thinking about how I could have gotten that lucky."

The journey to that moment was a long one for Tansey, a walk-on who joined the Notre Dame football program in the fall of 2010. Tansey said the conviction to come to Notre Dame and participate in the Navy ROTC program came from his relationship with his late grandfather, Petty Officer Third Class James Tansey, who served in the Navy from 1944 to 1954.

"My grandfather, my uncle

and my father were all big Notre Dame fans. My uncle died when I was in fourth grade, and my grandfather died this summer," Tansey said. "My grandfather was a Navy veteran and was absolutely one of the driving factors for me choosing the Navy. He was a huge Notre Dame fan, and he never missed a football game for me growing up. From pee-wee, high school, you name it. He got to watch me on TV at Notre Dame."

"This whole season has been the weirdest feeling, because I just said to myself, 'We haven't lost since he left us. It's hard not to feel like there's something special there.'"

After adjusting to the already-regimented schedule of an ROTC participant and training to meet strict physical fitness requirements of the Navy as a freshman, Tansey sought to take on further commitment in the fall of 2010. Tansey said he felt an urge to return to the playing field and continue playing football.

"After high school, I was okay being done with football. I was ready to walk away," Tansey said. "Then I got here. I still remember watching a game in 2009, we were in the stands at a game, and I got a text message from a friend of mine. It

basically said, 'Dude, I can't watch this from up here anymore, we have to try out for the team next season'"

Tansey was one of four players to join the team after a walk-on tryout in the fall of 2010. Since that time, he has logged almost three full seasons as a member of the scout team, prepping the Irish starters for opposing offenses. Regardless of whether he sees his first game experience on Senior Day against Wake Forest, Tansey said he will take many lessons from his time in an Irish uniform as he prepares to don another uniform in defense of his country.

"You know, football is just a game. But for me, my purpose is just to do what I'm told to the best of my ability in order to help the team improve," Tansey said. "That's an attitude that I plan on carrying forward. I'm going to do what I'm supposed to do to the best of my ability in order to fulfill whatever duty it is that I have."

"I don't see anything that really matters past that point. I've had three years to play a game that I love and have some fun before I head into service."

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KIRBY MCKENNA | The Observer

**Senior offensive lineman Matt Tansey runs onto the field prior to Notre Dame's 20-17 win over Purdue on Sept. 8.**



NICK TAUSCH | K | PLANO, TEXAS

# Tausch adds name to Notre Dame record books

By **JOSEPH MONARDO**  
Sports Writer

For Irish senior kicker Nick Tausch, watching the ball sail through the uprights is a special feeling.

"It feels great," Tausch said. "Just going through your technique and going through your rhythm that you have and knowing that all the hard work that you worked on through practice and throughout the week in the film study that you look at, the work that you put in really paid off."

Tausch, a native of Plano, Texas, had a standout freshman campaign in 2009 when he converted a then-school record 14-straight field goals in a stretch spanning seven games. In Notre Dame's 37-30 overtime victory over Washington on Oct. 3 of that year, the rookie was successful on all five of his field goal attempts — good for another school record. However, an injury cut his season short and forced Tausch to miss the season's final three games.

"It was really tough," Tausch said of the injury. "I ended up spraining my ankle and it was tough because I was on a roll and the team was doing well. So, I mean, it was tough to have to go on the sideline and know that since it was the end of the season, or the latter end of the season, it was going to be towards the end

and I probably wouldn't get back out there."

As a sophomore Tausch saw action in three games, mostly on kickoff duty. He converted his lone field goal attempt in 2010, a 34-yard kick against Miami in the Sun Bowl. He did not see game action as a junior and has not played since the 2012 opener against Navy.

Although he has not returned to a primary role in the Irish kicking game since his injury, the self-proclaimed "country boy" said he does not think about what could have been.

"I mean, I just think that injuries have kind of played a part in my career here, but I look at the positives that I've done and just continue to work better every single day knowing that my opportunity is around the corner," Tausch said. "It's there, I am going to jump on it and do well."

"I don't really try to focus on the negatives or anything negative that happened in the game before. I am just always looking at the positives. I know that injuries do play a part in sport."

Instead of focusing on setbacks, Tausch said he takes pride in his ability to be consistent when given the chance to perform.

"Really just me being consistent, I think [is my most important achievement]," he said. "I think I am [15-of-18 in field-goal attempts] throughout my

career, so just being consistent is something."

Ranked as the ninth-best kicker in the nation coming out of high school, Tausch said the decision to come to Notre Dame was originally difficult.

"I think it was [a hard decision] at the beginning but then the more that I thought about it, and then when I took my visit here, the more that I realized this place was for me," he said.

"When I got up here it was during the spring ... and it was just really cool and a really beautiful place, I just fell in love with it, to be honest. Right when I stepped on campus, and then throughout my whole tour that I had and meeting the coaches and everything, I knew it was the school for me."

The sociology major said he aims to stay a fifth year to play out his final year of NCAA eligibility. Tausch especially values the relationships he has formed with teammates, especially senior special teams players long snapper Jordan Cowart and punter Ben Turk.

"[What comes to mind is] really just my class, my teammates that are in my class this year," he said. "We have a really good group of guys, I probably couldn't ask [for] anyone better. I have just bonded with them and gotten to know them for the last four years, that I will have relationships with for the rest of my

life."

As to what comes after graduation, Tausch said he is not certain what path he wants to pursue, although a position within football is at the top of the list.

"I'm really not sure 100 percent yet," he said. "I am still kind of thinking about that, actually really starting to zone in on what

I really want to focus on. But right now I am leaning towards coaching. I'm not sure what type of level or whatnot, but I think it would be really cool to kind of give back to players that want to play."

Contact **Joseph Monardo** at [jmonardo@nd.edu](mailto:jmonardo@nd.edu)



SARAH O'CONNOR | The Observer

Senior kicker Nick Tausch attempts a field goal in Notre Dame's 50-10 win over Navy on Sept. 1 in Dublin. Tausch was 1-for-1 in the game.

KEVIN WALSH | LB | BETTENDORE, IOWA

# Walsh adjusts to mixing school with sport



SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior linebacker Kevin Walsh, left, prepares to run on the field before Notre Dame's 17-14 win over BYU on Oct. 20 at Notre Dame Stadium.

By **VICKY JACOBSEN**  
Sports Writer

The president of the Notre Dame Accounting Association didn't make an appearance at the club's concession stand in the hours leading up to kickoff against BYU this season. He had a pretty good excuse, though: Members of the varsity football team don't have much free time on game days.

For senior linebacker — and Accounting Association president

— Kevin Walsh, who walked onto the team at the beginning of this season, becoming a student-athlete in his fourth and final year at Notre Dame has been a crash course in balancing the different demands on his time.

"Now [my life has] much more structure and responsibility, more accountability to my teammates," Walsh said. "Definitely I have to have better time management skills, because between the credits I'm taking and the football I'm busy from seven in the

morning to seven at night."

Walsh says that crossing the divide between athletes and non-athletes has changed the way he views the segment of the student body that has access to the Guglielmino Athletics Complex.

"I definitely have a lot more respect for the amount of time that it takes to be a student-athlete, and the ability that all my teammates have to balance school and athletics," Walsh said. "And for them doing that for four years — that's amazing."

Although Walsh hadn't even considered trying to walk on to the team in previous seasons, he was friends with several players, including senior punter Ben Turk and senior long snapper Jordan Cowart. Walsh said they were the ones who told him he might have a shot as a walk-on.

"Well I know a couple guys on the team and then I got in contact with [director of football personnel] Tim McDonnell, and kind of worked it out through him," Walsh said. "And [the coaching staff] emailed me before summer camp and told me there was a spot open."

Although Walsh enjoyed his three years as a defensive end and

linebacker playing for Keenan on Sundays, he said interhall football could not prepare him for what he would see as part of a Division I program.

"[Interhall's] completely different, oh my gosh," Walsh said. "I'm looking at it now, after I've been exposed to this so often, and it just seems like ... it's a whole new world."

Walsh said that it took a little bit of time to get used to formal football after three years away from a varsity team.

"At first, it was definitely a curve," Walsh said. "But I've been getting into it now and now it's going well."

As scary as the Irish defense has been for opposing teams this season, Walsh says that his new teammates have made him feel at home.

"Everyone's so nice on the team, and they were so welcoming and so helpful, and you make so many new friends by joining the team," Walsh said. "You spend so much time with these people that you develop relationships with them. All the defensive guys, all the walk-ons, we have a close bond because of all the scout team work we do."

Although Walsh was not recruited to play football for the Irish, he never wavered in his desire to follow his grandfather and numerous other family members to Notre Dame, even if it meant that he would not play college football. He says that the opportunity to try out for the team so late in his college years came as a surprise, even to him.

"It kind of just sprung upon me," Walsh said. "It's my last year. I always kind of wanted to do it, every kid dreams about it."

Although he never expected to join the football team, Walsh says that being able to run onto the same field that his grandfather played on decades ago has been one of his favorite parts of the entire experience.

"Definitely running out of the tunnel," Walsh responded when asked about his favorite moment as a member of the team. "My grandpa played here on a national championship team with his two brothers, and he passed away my freshman year and to be able to do this senior year is really special."

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ROBBY TOMA | WR | LAIE, HAWAII

# Toma excels as slot receiver

Senior receiver steps into major offensive role following injuries to key players



SARAH O'CONNOR | The Observer

Senior receiver Robby Toma dives into the end zone in Notre Dame's 50-10 victory over Navy on Sept. 1 in Dublin. The score was Toma's first career rushing touchdown.

By **ANDREW OWENS**  
Assistant Managing Editor

Robby Toma has always embraced being the little guy. At 5-foot-9, 185 pounds, he doesn't have any other choice.

"Even when I was growing up I've always been a cocky, pushy guy," Toma said. "Just growing up, I've always thought I was better and that I could go out and win no matter what situation I was given. I've always been confident."

When Signing Day approached for Toma and close friend — and fellow graduate of Punahou High School in Honolulu — Manti Te'o, the two were set to go in different directions: Toma to UCLA and Te'o to Notre Dame. In a last ditch recruiting effort by former Irish coach Charlie Weis, Toma was persuaded to reconsider and ultimately faxed his letter of intent to Notre Dame.

"It was definitely difficult," the former three-star recruit said. "Over recruiting, you gain trust and a bond with these coaches, but in the end it's a business and coaches are going to make a decision to benefit them and their family, and I had to make the best decision for myself."

"[In Jan. 2011], my recruiting coach, [Norm] Chow, was at Utah, so as mad as [UCLA was] at me, I would've been there and he would've been gone. It wasn't difficult. As I look back on it, I couldn't be happier with the decision."

But that doesn't mean the ride was always a smooth one at a university nearly 5,000 miles away from his friends and family.

"It was an adjustment being

away from home and getting used to the speed of the game, the strength of the players," Toma said. "The first couple days of camp were rough on [Te'o and I], but once we settled in, we just got back to football and what we wanted to do. It was just a comfort level for us."

Toma said the adjustment was made easier by technology and the ability to contact family members and friends via phone or Skype.

"I couldn't imagine not talking to some of my friends and family that I talked to almost every day," he said. "So it really hasn't been that difficult and having Manti and [Hawaiian junior nose guard Kona Schwenke] here has definitely been a blessing and when you are missing home, you can look across and see a familiar face."

Even before Toma had to deal with icicles instead of palm trees, he first had to overcome a depth chart on which he was initially nowhere to be found.

"It was tough," he said. "I was redshirted the first few weeks, and then Coach Weis called me in after a bunch of injuries, so I played a few games my freshman year. You can't get down on yourself. ... You just need to learn from your mistakes and that's all you can do as a football player."

"It really tested my faith. My parents have always been there, but I just kept going, kept grinding and my opportunities came."

In the seventh game of his collegiate career, Toma finally broke through and recorded two receptions for 13 yards against Boston College. He caught another pass the following week but, following a coaching

change, Toma needed to hit the reset button once again.

As a sophomore in 2010, Toma didn't see any meaningful action until the 4-4 Irish faced Tulsa. After Theo Riddick and T.J. Jones went down with injuries, No. 9 was called into action. A

program-low in the form of a 28-27 loss to the Golden Hurricane resulted in an individual breakthrough for Toma, as he jumped into duty and caught four passes for 67 yards.

"I didn't play a snap, and then a couple injuries happened and they threw me in and I started playing well and they kept me in the whole game and I started the rest of the season," he said. "When the opportunity presented itself, I'm glad I was ready for it, and I showed the coaches I could play, so that might be the greatest moment I've had since being here."

Since then, Toma has been a consistent performer out of the slot position for the Irish.

"My whole thing was I just wanted to be a part of the offense and help out any way I could, whether it's blocking or catching passes," he said. "We're [undefeated] and it's a blessing to be on this team and help out in any way I can."

But even now that Toma has a stranglehold on the slot position, he stays true to his size and spunk.

"I know I'm quicker than most guys, so I know I have advantages over people and people have advantages over me, but I try to really focus on my strengths," he said. "When I do have a weakness, I try to work on it in the

offseason and in practice."

Toma said he refuses to trash talk with an opponent unless he feels he or a teammate has been disrespected. Earlier this season, when the Irish were warming up at Oklahoma, Toma said he couldn't resist.

"A guy came at me and was laughing at my chin hair, saying, 'How long have you been growing it?' or something childish and I came right back at him and Theo [Riddick] and [senior running back] Cierre [Wood] lost it on the bench," he said. "We shouldn't be doing that, but there's certain guys who have that on and off switch and as long as you can stay focused, I don't see a problem with it."

"Every stadium I go to I get ripped by the crowd because of my size, but I look forward to what the opposing crowd has to say to me."

Toma's attitude is even directed toward Irish coach Brian Kelly on occasion.

"In practice, they'll be calling out certain personnel for running back and I'll be in [Kelly's] ear like, 'Call mine.' He'll just look at me and start smiling," Toma said.

"If I didn't want to get the ball, there'd be a problem."

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BEN TURK | P | DAVIE, FLA.

# Turk steadily improves as starting punter

By LAURA COLETTI  
Sports Writer

During Irish punter Ben Turk's senior season, he has established success to cap a career that has faced many challenges as a rare four-year starter at punter.

Upon graduation from Saint Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Turk was ranked No. 3 nationally among punters in his class. Turk chose Notre Dame over Alabama, Cincinnati, Florida and Miami.

"It was a pretty easy decision for me as far as picking a school," Turk said. "Notre Dame was among the top academically, so for school reasons and academics I chose to come to Notre Dame."

His punting debut came during his freshman year in Notre Dame's 37-30 overtime victory over Washington. Turk was subsequently named the starter by then-Irish coach Charlie Weis and punted in six of the team's final eight games.

"Freshman year was pretty stressful, kind of going back and forth between playing and not playing," Turk said. "I was kind of competing for a job every week. I feel like it made me a better punter, though, just to be in those

pressure situations at practice, so that it was not only in games but in practice that I was having to compete."

Turk maintained his starting role into his sophomore year, staying consistent with a 38.3-yard average. He hit his stride during his junior year, when he averaged 40.3 yards per punt on the season and hit a career-long 58-yard punt in the Irish's 45-21 victory over Maryland.

This year, Turk has continued to increase the average length of his punts, as well as help the Irish on special teams. He cited holding for sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza as one of his more personal exciting points on the season.

"Against Purdue, the field goal to avoid going into overtime when I was holding [for Brindza] was exciting, because it was the first time I was a part of the game-tying or game-winning play," he said.

Along with his consistent improvement over the last four years, Turk and senior long-snapper Jordan Cowart have a personal record to keep intact. The two were teammates at Saint Thomas Aquinas as well, and the pair has yet to have one of their punts blocked in the seven years they

have been playing together — a statistic rare for a four-year starter at punter in college football. Turk has also earned a monogram all four years, another especially rare statistic for a punter.

It should be no surprise that Turk has become a more successful athlete as his football career has progressed. His uncle, Matt Turk, made the NFL Pro Bowl three times while punting for the Washington Redskins. The family ties influenced Turk while in high school and has continued to have an impact on his career.

"It was nice to kind of have a personal coach who's done it so long at the professional level," Turk said. "If I needed anyone to give advice or anything, he was probably the person to go to."

In addition to devoting time to his on-field improvement as a punter, Turk has worked hard to improve in the classroom. As a finance major in the Mendoza College of Business, he takes as much pride in representing Notre Dame as a student as he does in representing the school as a member of the football team. He is a tour guide for the University, as well as an employee at the Hesburgh Library's circulation desk during the offseason. Turk



SARAH O'CONNOR | The Observer

Senior punter Ben Turk prepares to punt against Stanford on Oct. 13. Turk has averaged 40.7 yards per punt this season, with a long of 53 yards.

thoroughly enjoys his classes in finance, and said they are his favorite thing about Notre Dame outside of football.

"I really enjoy learning about different finance topics and I think the classes are great," he said. "I actually enjoy going to class, so that's probably my favorite thing outside of football."

As for his post-graduation plans, Turk is exploring a variety of roles in the financial world

— while keeping an eye on potential opportunities on the gridiron. He is exploring options in both football and finance.

"I want to go into sales and trading or investment banking," he said. "But I'm still kind of playing out the whole football scenario and worrying about a job after that."

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CHRIS WATT | OL | GLEN ELLYN, ILL.

# Watt flourishes as pulling guard

Senior offensive lineman becomes a consistent force on the left side of the offensive line



MACKENZIE SAIN | The Observer

Senior offensive guard Chris Watt protects the quarterback in Notre Dame's 20-3 win over No. 10 Michigan State in East Lansing, Mich. on Sept. 15.

By JACK HEFFERON  
Sports Writer

"I had a dream last night that I was a muffer. And I woke up exhausted."

If you're talking about senior Chris Watt, that's usually the best way to start.

Throughout his life, Watt has opened everything from his high school commencement address to class presentations — even his speech at the pep rally before playing Stanford last month — with that same gem.

It's a peek at the lighter side of the 310-pound left guard, something opposing defensive linemen don't get to see on Saturdays.

"When I'm off the field, I try to keep things light and be funny," Watt said. "But I can get serious when I need to, and during practice and the games that's definitely where I'm at."

For the past four years, Watt has made his presence felt as one of the grittiest players on Notre Dame's roster. Whether pulling or pass blocking, his speed and nastiness have set the tone for and powered the Irish, making Watt more motor than muffer.

"He brings the toughness to our offense, and he's got to be the toughest guy on the team," senior tackle Zack Martin said. "He's played through injury, especially this year, and he brings that mentality to our whole offense."

Watt has had a pedigree of excellence, even before he arrived at Notre Dame. His brother Kevin was two years older and a starting defensive

end at Northwestern, while Chris himself was a five-star recruit and was pegged by many as the best offensive line prospect in the country.

Coming out of Glenbard High School on the west side of Chicago, Watt received scholarship offers from most of the Big Ten, including an opportunity to follow his brother to Evanston. The offer to line up against his brother every day — like they had always growing up in the backyard — was certainly appealing. But once he visited Notre Dame, Watt knew that he had met his new family.

"Being here and meeting the players I was going to be playing with and the guys in my class, I really bonded with them," he said. "I got to see a game here for the first time, and to see all of the tradition behind that was unbelievable. Everyone loves Notre Dame — or hates it — and it was cool to be put in the spotlight like that, especially with the opportunity to play on national TV every week as well."

And while Watt didn't go to Northwestern with his brother, he still had Kevin to go to for guidance, especially as a freshman. As a redshirt player dealing with the jump to college both athletically and academically, Watt said that having that lifeline was a huge part of his transition to Division I athletics.

"It was tough, but at the same time Kevin was very supportive of my decision," Watt said. "I called my brother and talked to him all the time. Being able to talk to a brother who had already gone through the process was really important. He really helped me through that camp

adjustment period."

Watt waited his turn that year, and found a role on special teams as a sophomore. Still, he wanted to make an impact on the line, and kept preparing for his chance, learning from upperclassmen like Eric Olsen, Chris Stewart and Trevor Robinson. Watt's chance finally came in a pressure-packed environment four games into the season, and he took full advantage.

"On the road at Boston College was the first time I got in for meaningful snaps, and I loved it," he said. "It was an awesome experience, and I think my adrenaline was at an all-time high. But that all came because I was able to learn the offense over the spring and the summer, and then perform it on the field."

Watt's excellence in spot work as a sophomore sprung him into the starting lineup as a junior, where he proved to be an important cog in one of the nation's most successful units. In the 13 games that season, the offensive line allowed just 17 sacks and powered the running game to an average of 4.8 yards per carry, both the best marks by an Irish line in well over a decade.

The left side of the line was particularly solid, as Watt had Martin lining up directly to his left. The two linemen have been roommates since that first summer of minicamp, and have shared the basement of an off-campus house for the past two years.

The two are nearly inseparable both on and off of the field, watching movies together during the week, then pounding

defensive linemen over the weekend.

"Having that relationship off the field helps a lot," Watt said. "It's great to have a guy with that kind of experience on your left side, and a guy where you know that he's going to have your back and you're going to have his. There's a lot of trust there."

Watt has continued to pave the way for the Irish this year, and usually has Martin right there beside him. As a result, the Irish have favored the left side of the line in much of their running game, letting Watt and Martin lead the team to victory with 'Power Left' after 'Power Left.'

"Chris and I have the same mentality, and we'll do whatever we can to help the team," Martin said. "We know when our number is called on the left side, we'll be ready to go."

Watt was ready and able during Notre Dame's most important game in almost two decades, on the road three weeks ago at then-No. 8 Oklahoma. The Irish looked like they wouldn't be able to keep pace early on, as halfway through the first quarter the Sooners had already amassed over 100 yards — compared to Notre Dame's meager nine.

But then Irish coach Brian Kelly dialed up a trap run to the left. Watt took a quick step to right, then wrenched all 309 pounds of Sooners senior defensive tackle Casey Walker with him, turning Walker a full 90 degrees. Senior running back Cierre Wood burst through the gap Watt had just vacated, then scampered 62 yards untouched to put the Irish on the scoreboard and keep them in the game.

"[Offensive line] Coach [Harry] Hiestand always tells us that we've got to do our job first, and use our technique, and obviously that's what I had to do on a play like that," Watt said. "Then lastly, you've got to whoop your man's [butt], and that's what we try to do every game."

"I feel like I've done a really good job of being really physical this year, and getting after my guy and playing hard has been

one of my strengths."

Looking ahead — even past a bowl game in Pasadena, Glendale or, he hopes, Miami — Watt is quick to assert that he'll be back for a fifth year, despite having solid NFL prospects and a mid-to-high round draft projection.

"Obviously I'll check and see the process, but I definitely want to come back for that fifth year," he said. "I've grown up playing football, and in coming here that's one aspiration that I've always had, is to play at the professional level. You think about it, but I try not to, because there's really nothing better than being 10-0 at Notre Dame with your buddies and the whole campus vibe around you. It's been great."

After what he hopes will be a long career in pros, Watt said that he will leave the world of football behind — but not the professional world. The marketing major plans to make the most of his degree, and continue on the tremendous experience he's had as an undergrad.

"Professors are amazing here. I have a few marketing professors that I feel I can go talk to whenever I want," he said. "I definitely want to go to graduate school when it's all said and done, hopefully after a professional career. I really would like to go into brand management."

Watt still has plenty of football left to play before then, and plenty of classes left to take. And even though he'll likely return for a fifth year under the Golden Dome, Watt is making sure that he continues to cherish every second of his fourth.

"A lot of people talk about the community of Notre Dame, and you can definitely feel that when you come here," Watt said. "It's a wonderful place to go to school, and everyone is passionate about everything that they do."

"For me, it's running out of that tunnel. It's kind of cliché, but I still get chills every time. I can't believe it's all gone by so fast, but it's such a great feeling."

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CIERREWOOD | RB | OXNARD, CALIF.

# Wood embraces California mentality

Senior running back adjusts to life away from home, excels in Kelly offense

By **ANDREW GASTELUM**  
Associate Sports Editor

In just one year, senior running back Cierre Wood went from 5,641 rushing yards and 71 touchdowns in high school to zero his freshman year. Zero yards, zero touchdowns and zero playing time.

"I was thinking about [transferring after freshman year]," Wood said. "I didn't like the position I was in and stuff like that. But [running backs] coach [Tony] Alford kept me grinding the whole time I've been here along with a couple of my teammates. And we decided we were going to make it work and found a way to make it happen."

Recruited by former Irish coach Charlie Weis, Wood was a highly regarded four-star recruit, also receiving offers from Auburn, Florida and USC. Coming from all the attention to none at all was a definite challenge, combined with the adjustment to the frigid weather.

"In the beginning it was terrible, because of the fact that it was so cold," he said. "But once you've been out here for a long time, you begin to adapt. And once I got that, it felt easier at that point."

Wood has his sights set on something beyond his collegiate career, 2,275 rushing yards, 15 touchdowns and three seasons later.

"I can't really say it, but it has to do with the [NFL]," Wood said. "If they give me good news, I might skedaddle. It all depends, but that is what it will come down to. But I'm not really worried about that."

## West Coast bias

When it comes down to home, the Oxnard, Calif., native had

only one thing to say.

"West Coast, best coast, West Coast is the best coast," Wood said.

Wood started his spectacular high school career in Long Beach, Calif., at Long Beach Poly, the same school that produced NFL talents DeSean Jackson, Mercedes Lewis and Willie McGinest. But Wood transferred before his sophomore year to Santa Clara High School, where he rushed for 2,612 yards and 34 touchdowns in his junior year alone.

And even though he is in his fourth year away from home, Wood said he still misses the luxuries of home.

"I miss everything. In-N-Out [Burger]. Going to the beach, all the clubs in Hollywood. Going shopping," Wood said. "Everything in California is just better than any other place in the world. There is something to do at all times. You'll never be bored. You can go outside, literally walk outside your door, and something is bound to happen. I don't think it's the same with the Midwest or the East."

Although some things could not come to South Bend with him, Wood said he brought the mentality of his state with him, and it has translated in between the tackles as well.

"Just the fact that in California, people don't really trip out about a lot of stuff," Wood said. "Everybody's calm, everybody's collected. My demeanor is just real cool. When things go down, a lot of people always ask me why I am so nonchalant about stuff. But I just can't help it. Even when I'm mad, I don't really trip out about it. That's just how I roll."

No matter wherever his life takes him, Wood said one thing will remain constant.

"[I'm a California boy] through and through. It doesn't matter where [I live]."

## All-around effort

Coming from high school to college, Wood worked on refining his raw athleticism and speed into a lethal combination of agility and power.

"At the beginning it was all finesse, but I had to learn how to become a complete back," Wood said. "If I had to go in between the tackles, I would be able to do it. Or I could be the speedy guy on the outside. Once I got here I learned how to do it."

"That's how it is in the [NFL]. That's part of why we are here. We are not doing this for nothing. The backs in the league now are all well-rounded. There are some that are finesse and make it work. But at some point you have to have the physicality to run up the middle. I figured I should get a start on that early rather than later."

The senior gained 23 pounds between the summer of his freshman year and his senior year, putting in the work during and after practice. He even went as far as to ask senior linebacker Manti Te'o to hit and tackle him repeatedly so the 6-foot, 215-pound back could improve his toughness and pass blocking.

"I really wasn't good at pass blocking at the beginning, so [Te'o] is a good pass rusher," he said. "When I got here, we had a bunch of big dudes like [linebackers] Kerry Neal and Brian Smith. So what I would do is have them line up coming off the edge and do their best move, whether it be a bull rush or whatever. That's what made me get better."

Last season, Wood's hard



SARAH O'CONNOR | The Observer

Senior running back Cierre Wood cuts upfield during Notre Dame's 20-13 overtime victory over Stanford on Oct. 13 at Notre Dame Stadium.

work paid off, becoming just the 11th player in Notre Dame history to surpass the 1,000-yard rushing mark, highlighted by a career high 191 yards on 20 carries against Purdue on Oct. 1, 2011. Despite missing the first two games of the 2012 season for violating team rules, Wood has rushed for 570 yards and three touchdowns while averaging 6.3 yards per carry.

But one play this season still has the running back fuming: a goal-line fumble in the second overtime against Pittsburgh on Nov. 3.

"I don't care what anyone says, I know I [scored]," Wood said. "The ball crossed the plane, but it is what it is. It shouldn't have happened, but it did. I am just happy we won the game. My teammates kept me up. And we are still undefeated. I don't care what people say about the game, we still won and that still counts."

"I was kind of upset about it, but you have to snap out of it and step right back."

In his Notre Dame career, Wood has recorded four two-touchdown performances, with the latest coming in a 41-3 win over Miami on Oct. 6. But he has yet to score three touchdowns in a single game.

"I can do it," he said. "If they need me to, I could get five. I know I can get multiple. If I get the ball out there, I know it can happen."

## Lasting bonds

In his four years at Notre Dame, Wood has had plenty of time to develop a reputation as a lovable joker within the Irish locker room, where no one is safe from a verbal onslaught.

"They all have nicknames. Chocolate drop [Louis Nix]. [Robby Toma] is Tommy from 'The Rugrats.' We all

have nicknames," Wood said. "[Being a joker] is just how I am. Being from California, everyone just makes fun of each other. I was born and raised like that, so I might as well bring it here."

But Wood said he has developed a special bond and target for his barbs in his roommates and fellow four-star recruits from the class of 2009: defensive tackle Tyler Stockton and running back Theo Riddick.

"We are around each other as often as possible," he said. "I live with Theo, so I see him every day. So being around him everyday, we can pick up on each other's tendencies and learn a lot more from each other."

Always trying to one-up the same back he shares carries and a house with, Riddick interrupted Wood and jokingly gave his take on his fellow senior.

"If you ask him if he can paint, he will say he's the best painter. If you ask him 'Can you play tennis?' He will say he is the next Serena [Williams]," Riddick said. "He thinks he is the best at everything. Let me correct that: I'm the best. Don't let anybody else tell you different."

For Wood, going to school more than 2,000 miles away from home has been a journey mixed with hardships, roadblocks and change. But it has also been one mixed with diligence, resolve and camaraderie — something Wood said he will never forget.

"There are a lot of experiences basically," he said. "From coming out of the tunnel to going to class or playing on the field, I'll take in everything I've been through since I've been here."

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SUZANNA PRATT | The Observer

Senior running back Cierre Wood celebrates Notre Dame's first touchdown in a 30-13 win over No. 8 Oklahoma in Norman, Okla. The 62-yard run is the longest of Wood's career.



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