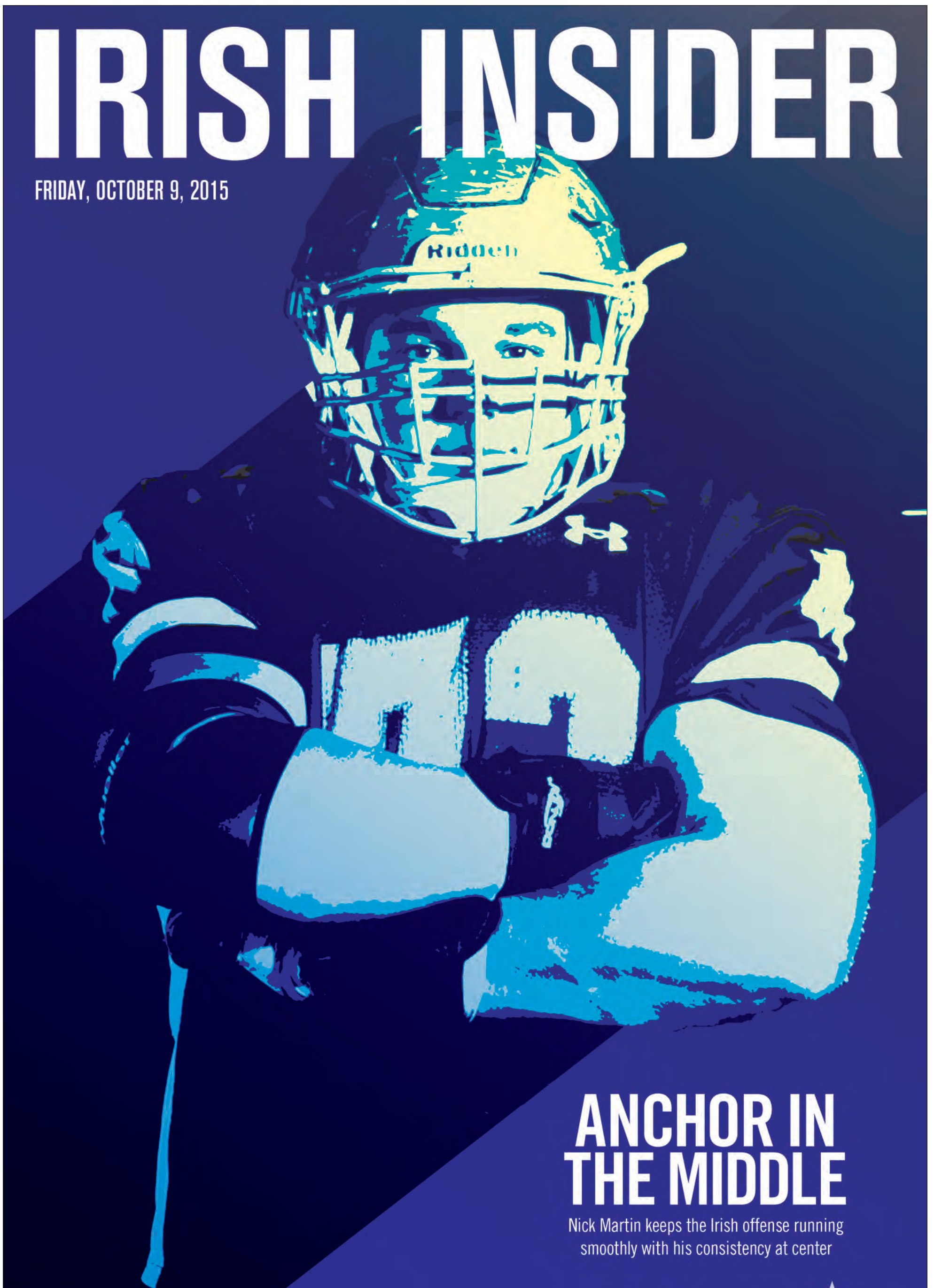


# IRISH INSIDER

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2015



## ANCHOR IN THE MIDDLE

Nick Martin keeps the Irish offense running smoothly with his consistency at center

THE OBSERVER

Photo Illustration by Erin Rice and Zach Llorens





# NICK MARTIN:

By **GREG HADLEY**  
Editor-in-Chief

Nick Martin: the centerpiece of Notre Dame's offense.

Not sophomore quarterback DeShone Kizer, not junior receiver Will Fuller, not even senior running back C.J. Prosise. It's graduate student center and captain Nick Martin that propels the Irish attack forward.

That's not Martin's opinion. It's what his teammates say.

"He's the guy that makes it go," Prosise said of Martin. "Without him, we couldn't have a well-oiled machine like we do. And just his leadership on the field and what he does for our team has been amazing."

As Martin goes, so does Notre Dame's offensive line. And as the O-line

goes, so does the Irish offense. Through the first four games of the year, the front five dominated, opening up massive holes for Prosise to run through for 600 yards and six rushing touchdowns and protecting the quarterback to the tune of just five sacks.

With Martin at center and senior Ronnie Stanley at left tackle, the Irish line features what many pundits consider future NFL talent. Add that to one of the best rushing games in the country, and Notre Dame seemed primed to ride the run all season long.

"As an [offensive] lineman we love to run the ball," Martin said Sept. 30. "We like when we have success. Going back to our running backs, the way they run ... it's unbelievable. Up front, we work our butts off to try

and make holes and do our best."

Then came last weekend's game against Clemson. In the pouring rain, Martin and the line struggled, allowing four sacks and five other tackles for loss in a 24-22 defeat to the Tigers. Prosise had 50 yards on 15 attempts and was hit at or before the line of scrimmage on 44 percent of his touches, according to ESPN.

Prosise did not blame the line for Notre Dame's rushing struggles, and Martin said the Irish were bound to experience a setback at some point.

"I can never say our O-line did a bad job in that game. They did everything they could. When you're running the ball and there's a safety in the hole that I'm running to every time, it's hard to block that guy. They're

not accounting for that guy, there's only five of them," Prosise said.

"We played this game a long time, and you know you're not going to be able to rush for 200 yards every game, that's not reality," Martin said.

After the game, Martin's fellow graduate student and captain Joe Schmidt said no one on Notre Dame would smile for the next week. On Wednesday, the linebacker said he was still "livid" over the loss.

Martin was also upset after the loss, saying the Irish were "too good of a team to come down and lose this game."

But by Tuesday, he said, he had turned his focus to Navy, refusing to let the defeat bother him anymore.

"Yeah, anger, you know," Martin said of his emotions

following the game. "It was definitely not easy to lose. But you win a game, you lose a game. You sit down, watch the film, learn from mistakes. Go on and get ready for Navy."

"[I] definitely have a chip on the shoulder. But I put it to rest after Monday."

That determination to move on is key to Martin's leadership style, he said. After five years at Notre Dame, three starting and two as a captain, he has learned to stay level-headed and consistent for his teammates.

"I always look to give the same every day. Whether it's adversity [or] good times, people have to be able to rely on you to be that same guy," Martin said. "I try to be the same guy every day."

Toiling away, Martin has been about as consistent



CAITLYN JORDAN | The Observer

*Irish graduate student offensive lineman Nick Martin makes a block during Notre Dame's 34-27 win over Virginia on Sept. 12.*

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# LINE LEADER

as anybody else on the line this season so far. And that makes him invisible to most fans. Almost always, the only time an offensive lineman's name is spoken during the game is when he is called for a penalty. So far, Martin has been flagged just twice this year, both for false starts.

But that anonymity doesn't mean Martin's teammates don't recognize his consistent play in the trenches.

"He's always the same, he's always out there, the same leader, the same guy every day," Prosise said. "He's always encouraging, he's always motivating. It's great to have him as the leader of our offense because we can always look to him to be positive and look to him for that leadership. He's an amazing guy, and I'm glad that's the guy I get to run behind every day."

That consistency has helped to put Martin in a small circle of two-time captains for Notre Dame. He and senior defensive lineman Sheldon Day joined that group at the beginning of this season, bringing the total to 21 in program history.

"[It's a] very special sense of pride," Martin said of the honor. "It's probably one of those things that won't hit you until you leave. Just to represent all those people that came before you, I think, is the biggest thing. You look up on the wall, and you see all those amazing people that came before you, and you represent them."

One of those people who came before Martin is his older brother, Zack. Another two-time captain, Zack Martin last suited up for the Irish in 2013 and has since become an All-Pro lineman

with the Dallas Cowboys.

By watching and playing alongside Zack, Nick grew into his own as a leader, he said. He also developed an appreciation for the consistency of Notre Dame's offensive line — not only from week to week, but over the span of years.

"It's about the people that come before you," Martin said Sept. 30. "The O-lines, having guys like Chris Watt, Zack Martin, Christian Lombard, those guys, and even before that, the O-line at Notre Dame, especially in the '90s and ever since then, has always been a sense of pride, and we just try to carry that on."

Carrying on meant weathering a positional shuffle in 2014 after three games, as Martin transitioned from center to left guard. Then, in spring practice this year,

he went back to center, even as question of to whom he would snap the ball — Everett Golson or junior Malik Zaire — remained up in the air.

For the most part, Martin and the offensive line has been spared the injury bug that overtook Notre Dame early this season. But they did have to deal with big changes in personnel around them, as Prosise and Kizer took over in the backfield. Still, Martin emphasized consistency when it came to adapting to those changes.

"It's business as usual. We like to keep things the same up front, we have to prepare the same way, and we gotta play the same way. Doesn't matter who's behind us," Martin said after Kizer took over for the injured Zaire.

Keeping the offensive line humming along is not much

of a challenge for Martin. Dating back to the days of his brother, the unit has always been close-knit on and off the field, and as a leader last year, he spent time with the younger lineman talking about life outside football.

But as the only offensive captain this season, Martin has expanded his role in that regard to include other position groups. His consistency and skill on the field, though, are not quite the same in the other pastimes he shares with his teammates.

"I'm not a big video game guy," Martin said. "... I don't even know why I'm telling you this, but we had a league, [and] Will Fuller literally beat me by about 100 points in Madden. So that explains to you how bad I am."

Contact Greg Hadley at [ghadley@nd.edu](mailto:ghadley@nd.edu)

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*Notre Dame two-time captain Nick Martin runs into the action on an Irish rush in the team's Sept. 12 victory against Virginia.*

COMMENTARY

# Performance will set tone for rest of season



Alex Carson  
Associate Sports Editor

The situations are pretty similar.

A year ago, Notre Dame traveled to Tallahassee, Florida, had a chance at the goal line in the final minute to win the game against top ACC contender Florida State in primetime and came up just short. The first chance for the Irish to bounce back was against Navy.

On Saturday, Notre Dame traveled to Clemson, South Carolina, had a chance from three yards out to send the game to overtime against top ACC contender Clemson in primetime and came up just short.

And this week, the Irish once more have a chance to bounce back against the Midshipmen.

Granted, a lot about the two games went different — Notre Dame played its best game of the season last year at Florida State and didn't

this year at Clemson — but the spot the team finds itself in is much the same: Win out, and the Irish have a chance at being one of the four teams in the playoff. But lose, and it's all done and dusted.

Like last year, Navy provides a perfect opportunity for the Irish to stake their claim to being in the race.

A year ago though, Notre Dame didn't. After taking the bye week off, the Irish went to Landover, Maryland, and looked pretty lackluster in a 49-39 win over Navy that became more about "surviving" another week than anything else — especially when Joe Schmidt went down.

While the Irish got through that game against Navy with a win last year, the uninspiring performance set the tone for the rest of the season. A big matchup at No. 11 Arizona State followed, in which the Irish found themselves down 34-3 before halftime.

Subsequent losses to Northwestern, Louisville and USC capped off a miserable end to what was once such a promising season.

This year, the story's much of the same. After Navy's visit this weekend, No. 17 USC is set to hit Notre Dame Stadium before the team's bye week over fall break. Then a tricky trip to Temple waits, and four weeks later, a visit to No. 16 Stanford could be the deciding factor in a potential playoff push.

But that push has to start this weekend against the Midshipmen. Led by star senior quarterback Keenan Reynolds, Navy is one of the better teams the Irish will face the rest of the way, and the game affords a grand opportunity for Notre Dame to make a statement on how the rest of its season will pan out.

And you'd have to think a veteran-led team like Notre Dame should have no issues learning from its mistakes down the stretch last year.

Sure, injuries took a toll on last year's team — and they already have this year — but the quintet of captains needs to ensure there's not a let down from the squad this week.

In theory, with four captains on the defensive side of the ball (and a strong performance against Georgia Tech's triple option scheme already in the books this season), the Irish defense shouldn't have much of an issue with the Midshipmen.

But that's theory, and we've seen two letdowns already from this squad: at Virginia following the dominant performance against Texas and early in the game against Massachusetts after the Georgia Tech win.

"Every single weekend, you're playing elimination football," Irish head coach Brian Kelly said Sunday.

Elimination football. That's the perfect way to describe how the Irish have to treat the rest of the season.

From now through the end

of November, Notre Dame can't slip up if it's going to track down its goals.

And there's no better way to set the tone than with a dominant performance over Navy this weekend. Bring it, snag a big win and carry tons of momentum into another pivotal game against the Trojans next week.

Struggle and sneak by with another tight win over Navy though, and the door's wide open for another disaster the week after.

This is it. If Notre Dame is serious about winning a national championship, it has to start this weekend with a focused, strong, dominant performance.

Anything else? It means the Irish aspirations are nothing more than lip service.

*Contact Alex Carson at [acarson1@nd.edu](mailto:acarson1@nd.edu)*

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

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RECRUITING

# Two touted visits highlight quiet weekend

By **BRIAN PLAMONDON**  
Sports Writer

With only two official visitors expected on campus this weekend, Notre Dame will be fairly quiet on the recruiting front for the Navy game.

This weekend represents the calm before the storm, as 15 official visitors will flock to campus next weekend when Notre Dame takes on USC, Irish recruiting analyst Andrew Ivins said.

Still, the two visitors this weekend — Los Angeles cornerback David Long and Boulder, Colorado, defensive end Carlo Kemp — are top priorities for the Irish. Flipping Long, a four-star Stanford commit and Rivals.com’s 134th-ranked player, would be a coup for the Irish because of their constant battles with the Cardinal, Ivins said.

“Over the years, Notre Dame has always struggled going head-to-head with Stanford to get safeties and cornerbacks,” Ivins, who covers Notre Dame recruiting for Rivals.com’s Blue and Gold Illustrated, said. “But this is a guy who has yet to be admitted into Stanford, so he’s exploring his options. Notre Dame’s never stopped recruiting him when he committed to a school.”

Kemp, the other player on campus, is another four-star talent who is also the top-ranked player in Colorado and 203rd-ranked player nationally. The nephew of Indianapolis Colts head coach Chuck Pagano, Kemp is a big-bodied defensive lineman at 6-foot-3 and 250 pounds.

“He’s a strong side defensive end that could grow into

a defensive tackle at the next level,” Ivins said. “He’s pretty high on Notre Dame and Michigan. Heading into the weekend, Notre Dame has a lot of ground to make up if they’re going to leapfrog Michigan.”

While the Irish will be chasing Long and Kemp, they won’t have to worry about 2017 tight end Cole Kmet anymore, a Chicago area prospect who pledged to Notre Dame last Friday. Kmet, Rivals’ 10th-ranked tight end prospect, will join fellow 2017 recruit and top-ranked tight end Brock Wright at the position for the Irish.

“Notre Dame took a calculated risk of sorts when they decided they were going to pass on a tight end in 2016 and look to take two in 2017,” Ivins said. “Whereas Brock Wright is more of the traditional tight end like Durham Smythe who can block and catch the ball, Cole Kmet is like a receiver turned tight end. He can stretch the field.

“... [Notre Dame] really put on the press to get him because they think he’s a dynamic guy. In a span of just a couple of months he picked up offers from pretty much every school out there, and it really just came down to Notre Dame and Ohio State.”

While Kmet and Wright are currently healthy, the same cannot be said for a number of Notre Dame commits in the 2016 recruiting class. Bradenton, Florida, safety Spencer Perry, a three-star prospect per Rivals, is out for the rest of the season with a shoulder injury. Still, Perry shouldn’t see much of a drop in his ranking, Ivins said.

“He had been evaluated multiple times in person,

and I don’t think he’s a guy where a season-ending injury will have much of an impact on his ranking,” Ivins said. “He’s been graded out as of what he’s done at camps.”

Three-star defensive end Adetokunbo Ogundeji, on the other hand, may fall as a result of a sprained MCL that will keep the Walled Lake, Michigan, native out all year.

“He was kind of a project player from the start,” Ivins said. “It would have been beneficial for him to just play football, because he really hasn’t been playing it much. He’s been playing it for a few years and is a guy that just needed to get reps.”

The last injured future Irish player is long snapper John Shannon, who had already punched his ticket to the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in January. A shoulder injury will hold Shannon out for the foreseeable future, although a return for a play-off run is not out of the question, Ivins said.

As far as injuries go for high school prospects, especially those who are uncommitted, they are considered but Notre Dame’s coaches ultimately focus on what the player did before the injury, Ivins said.

“It all depends on the injury and how that plays into the future development,” Ivins said.

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

**Contact Brian Plamondon at bplamond@nd.edu**



Photo courtesy of Rivals.com and Blue and Gold Illustrated

*Class of 2016 defensive end Carlo Kemp, a native of Boulder, Colorado, is one of two high school recruits making an official visit to Notre Dame this week, according to recruiting analyst Andrew Ivins.*

## CURRENT NOTRE DAME COMMITS

### CLASS OF 2016:

- IAN BOOK  
— QB —  
EL DORADO HILLS, CALIF.
- PARKER BOUDREAUX  
— OL —  
ORLANDO, FLA.
- CHASE CLAYPOOL  
— WR —  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.
- LIAM EICHENBERG  
— OL —  
CLEVELAND
- JALEN ELLIOTT  
— S —  
CHESTERFIELD, VA.
- JAMIR JONES  
— LB —  
ROCHESTER, N.Y.
- TONY JONES  
— RB —  
BRADENTON, FLA.
- TOMMY KRAEMER  
— OL —  
CINCINNATI
- JULIAN LOVE  
— CB —  
LAGRANGE PARK, ILL.
- ADETOKUNBO OGUNDEJI  
— DL —  
WALLED LAKE, MICH.
- JULIAN OKWARA  
— DL —  
CHARLOTTE, N.C.
- SPENCER PERRY  
— S —  
BRADENTON, FLA.
- JOHN SHANNON  
— LS —  
WILMETTE, ILL.
- KEVIN STEPHERSON  
— WR —  
JACKSONVILLE, FLA.
- D.J. MORGAN  
— S —  
BELLFLOWER, CA.

### CLASS OF 2017:

- DILLAN GIBBONS  
— OL —  
ST. PETERSBURG, FLA.
- JOSHUA LUGG  
— OL —  
WEXFORD, PA.
- BROCK WRIGHT  
— TE —  
CYPRESS, TEXAS
- COLE KMET  
— TE —  
ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, ILL.





CHRIS COLLINS | The Observer



CHRIS COLLINS | The Observer

MIDSHIPMEN PASSING

Senior quarterback Keenan Reynolds is certainly the most prolific playmaker on Navy’s offensive side, but that doesn’t really extend to his passing game. Thus far into 2015, he has only 27 attempts in four games. And while his efficiency rating of 158.7 would rank among the top in the nation if he qualified, the general trend in his career has been downward. His attempts per game and yards per contest have both dropped from his sophomore year.

Reynolds’ targets are limited as well. Junior Jamir Tillman is the only Midshipman receiver with more than three career receptions.

Meanwhile, the Irish defensive backs are coming off a solid performance against Clemson in which they limited Deshaun Watson to 97 yards passing. Junior safety Max Redfield came back from injury to lead the team with 14 tackles, junior cornerback Cole Luke had his second interception of the year, and senior safety Elijah Shumate looked strong. After a shaky start to the year, this unit appears to have turned a corner.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

MIDSHIPMEN RUSHING

Notre Dame has already faced a triple-option offense this year in Georgia Tech, but they have yet to face a player like Keenan Reynolds. Just four touchdowns away from breaking the NCAA record for rushing scores, Reynolds is far and away the leading quarterback in rushing yards in the country and spearheads an attack that ranks third in the nation in rushing yards per game.

Both teams played in the rain last week. But while Notre Dame’s defensive front surrendered nearly 200 yards rushing and five yards per attempt, Navy’s offense kicked into high gear, racking up 270 yards, three touchdowns and no turnovers.

EDGE: NAVY

MIDSHIPMEN OFFENSIVE COACHING

Notre Dame defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder prepped his team to near-perfection for its matchup against Georgia Tech’s triple-option offense. The Irish limited the Yellow Jackets to one rushing score

and just a tad over 200 yards.

But the Irish defense fell apart in the final few minutes of the game and then came out flat and uninspired against Clemson, only to rebound for a stellar second portion of the game. So consistency remains an issue with the unit.

Navy has been a model of consistency under head coach Ken Niumatalolo, making six bowl games in seven years. What’s more, he has honed and perfected the triple-option offense he inherited from his predecessor, Paul Johnson. Navy has given Notre Dame fits under Niumatalolo, winning twice and keeping things close several other times, largely on the strength of its offense.

EDGE: EVEN

MIDSHIPMEN SPECIAL TEAMS

While not the most explosive unit, Navy’s special teams has put together a solid albeit unspectacular season thus far. The Midshipmen have not returned any punts or kicks for touchdowns or kicked a field goal longer than 40 yards. But they also have only lost one fumble on the season, have not missed any of their field goals and average 42.5 yards per punt, including one that went 72 yards.

Navy only averages 19.1 yards per kickoff return, but Notre Dame’s coverage team ranks 58th in the country. The situation is the same on punt returns: Navy averages eight yards per return, while Notre Dame allows eight yards on defense. On kickoffs, senior Austin Grebe gets touchbacks on more than a third of his kicks.

EDGE: EVEN

MIDSHIPMEN SCHEDULE (4-0)

- Sept. 5 Colgate (W 48-10)
- Sept. 19 East Carolina (W 45-21)
- Sept. 26 @ Connecticut (W 28-18)
- Oct. 3 Air Force (W 33-11)
- Oct. 10 @ Notre Dame
- Oct. 24 Tulane
- Oct. 31 South Florida
- Nov. 7 @ Memphis
- Nov. 14 SMU
- Nov. 21 @ Tulsa
- Nov. 27 @ Houston
- Dec. 12 vs. Army

HEAD T

NOTRE DAME STADIUM

NAVY



(Jr.) Jamir Tillman 4 WR  
(So.) Chad Lewellyn 84

(Sr.) Demond Brown 25 SB  
(Jr.) Dishan Romine 28

(Sr.) Chris Swain 37 FB  
(Sr.) Quentin Ezell 32

(Sr.) Keenan Reynolds 19 QB  
(Jr.) Tago Smith 18

(Sr.) DeBrandon Sanders 21 SB  
(Jr.) Calvin Cass Jr. 20

(Sr.) Joey Gatson 65 LT  
(Fr.) Andrew Wood 69

(Sr.) E.K. Binns 57 LG  
(Jr.) Adam West 72

(Sr.) Blaze Ryder 64 C  
(Sr.) Brandon Greene 61

(Sr.) Ben Tamburello 60 RG  
(So.) Evan Martin 71

(So.) Robert Lindsey 75 RT  
(Jr.) Blake Copeland 79

(Sr.) Thomas Wilson 89 WR  
(So.) Craig Scott 82

(Jr.) Brendon Clements 1 LCB  
(So.) Elijah Merchant 14

(Jr.) Josiah Powell 48 OLB  
(Jr.) Mike Kelly 49

(Jr.) Daiquan Thomasson 26 S  
(So.) Jerry Thompson 11

(So.) Micah Thomas 44 ILB  
(Sr.) Tyler Goble 54

(Jr.) Daniel Gonzales 58 ILB  
(Jr.) Ryan Harris 59

(Sr.) Lorentez Barbour 2 S  
(So.) Randy Beggs 8

(So.) D.J. Palmore 45 OLB  
(So.) Kevin McCoy 40

(Sr.) Quincy Adams 5 RCB  
(Fr.) Sean Williams 6

(Sr.) Austin Grebe 43 PK  
(Sr.) Nick Sloan 6

(Jr.) Alex Barta 80 P  
(Sr.) Gavin Jernigan 16

(Sr.) DeBrandon Sanders 21 PR  
(Jr.) Calvin Cass Jr. 20

(Jr.) Will Worth 15 H  
(So.) Randy Beggs 8

(Jr.) Dishan Romine 28 KR  
(Jr.) Toneo Gulley 22

(Jr.) Josh Antol 94 LS  
(So.) Ronnie Querry 85



Greg Hadley  
Editor-in-Chief



Mary Green  
Assistant Managing Editor



Zach Klonsinski  
Sports Editor

Brian Kelly and the Irish have said all the right things since the loss to Clemson last weekend: They’re not in this for moral victories; they’re going to come out angry against Navy; they’re not concerned about the College Football Playoff, just the next game.

But why should anyone believe the talk? If the past is any indication, this matchup with Navy has all the makings of a trap game. Last season, in almost the exact same situation — coming off a gut-wrenching road loss — the Irish came out flat and struggled to put away a pesky Navy squad. And this year, Notre Dame has come out flat against underdogs Virginia and UMass, with varying degrees of success in pulling away. Navy is certainly is more capable than the Minutemen and the Cavaliers.

Brian Kelly said Notre Dame can’t afford any more slow starts like it had against Clemson, and that holds especially true this week against a potent Navy offense led by Keenan Reynolds and the triple-option attack.

The Irish prepared for a similar situation against Georgia Tech, and they were able to score early and often against the Yellow Jackets.

However, to do that, the receivers can’t afford to continuously let down DeShone Kizer like they did against Clemson. The Irish offense still relies largely on the play of C.J. Prosise and the offensive line, but last week’s game proved an air attack is necessary for success as well. Perhaps their lackluster play was a result of the rain, so they should be able to rebound Saturday.

The last time Notre Dame faced a triple-option offense, it completely shut it down for 53 minutes. The Irish defense also shut down Clemson last weekend for about 53 minutes. Is this the week the defense finally puts together a 60-minute effort like it did against Texas to start the season?

Not quite. Keenan Reynolds and the Navy offense will find success at times Saturday.

But with how angry the Notre Dame offense, particularly the receivers and offensive line, will play, it won’t matter much. This one will be over by the end of the third quarter as the Irish rebound with a statement victory.

Look for Corey Robinson to begin down the path to redemption with a solid day.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 33, Navy 27

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 38, Navy 24

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 45, Navy 24



# O HEAD

3:30 P.M. ON NBC

## NO. 15 NOTRE DAME



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

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

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

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

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

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

MLB **38** Joe Schmidt (Gr.)  
59 Jarrett Grace (Gr.)

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

S **10** Max Redfield (Jr.)  
41 Matthias Farley (Gr.)

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

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

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

TE **13** Tyler Luatua (So.)  
10 Alizé Jones (Fr.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### IRISH PASSING

In a game in which so much went wrong for Notre Dame, sophomore quarterback DeShone Kizer's play at Clemson was a bright spot. In his first road start, Kizer went 19-for-35 for 321 yards and two scores, and that's with the Irish leaving more than 100 yards on the turf through dropped passes.

That said, no matter how well Kizer played last time out, his receivers have to avoid dropping balls in key situations. Junior receiver Corey Robinson dropped a deep ball that could have been a big touchdown and a crucial 2-point conversion attempt against Clemson, junior Will Fuller dropped a key third-down pass early in the game and other drops plagued the Irish passing game all day long. That has to change if Kizer is to truly have a breakout game.

While they haven't played a particularly impressive opponent yet, the Midshipmen have allowed just 186 yards per game through the air after four contests. If Notre Dame's receivers fail to take advantage of the easy catches this week, Navy's secondary could be good enough to force the Irish to rely even more on the ground game.

### EDGE: EVEN

### IRISH RUSHING

Despite a lackluster performance on the ground last week at Clemson, the Irish rush game still ranks impressively high in both yards per game (13th) and yards per carry (seventh) nationally. While that's mostly thanks to a dominant performance against Massachusetts, one poor game on the ground does not a season make.

Against a squarely average Midshipmen rush defense, it would be expected for the Notre Dame ground game to have a bounce-back game against Navy. A weaker run game notched 218 yards and four scores on the ground in Notre Dame's win a season ago, so it would not be a surprise to see the Irish run game hit the 200-yard mark for the fifth time this season.

The offensive line's play a week ago could be cause for concern, but C.J. Prosise ran rampant over each of Notre Dame's four previous opponents, and he should be able to do so once more against the Midshipmen.

### EDGE: NOTRE DAME

### IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

It took a few possessions, but Brian Kelly and the Irish staff eventually advanced into a solid offensive game plan a week ago at Clemson — poor execution by the offensive line and receivers had more to do with Notre Dame's struggles than the tactical choices themselves.

At the end of the day, the Irish have still topped 400 yards in each of their five games this season, a sign Kelly has a good familiarity for where this unit is, something that should not be surprising given his past success with young quarterbacks.

Navy's defense is nothing special, so a solid game plan should be more than enough to get the job done offensively.

### EDGE: NOTRE DAME

### IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

As has been the story so often this season, a couple key mistakes plagued the Irish special teams unit once more at Clemson last week.

After a quick score and stop from the Tigers on the first two possessions of the game, sophomore Tyler Newsome shanked his first punt attempt of the game, putting the Irish defense in a terrible spot, one from which Clemson scored easily for a 14-0 lead.

And a week after taking a punt to the house, freshman receiver C.J. Sanders fumbled on the opening kickoff of the second half, effectively handing the Tigers seven more points.

Despite positive flashes from Newsome, Sanders and freshman kicker Justin Yoon, who did well to convert his one field goal attempt, it's tough to put much faith in the unit to avoid more costly mistakes.

### EDGE: NAVY

### IRISH SCHEDULE (4-1)

Sept. 5 **Texas (W 38-3)**  
Sept. 12 **@ Virginia (W 34-27)**  
Sept. 19 **Georgia Tech (W 30-22)**  
Sept. 26 **Massachusetts (W 62-27)**  
Oct. 3 **@ Clemson (L 24-22)**  
Oct. 10 **Navy**  
Oct. 17 **USC**  
Oct. 31 **@ Temple**  
Nov. 7 **@ Pittsburgh**  
Nov. 14 **Wake Forest**  
Nov. 21 **vs. Boston College**  
Nov. 28 **@ Stanford**



**Alex Carson**  
Associate Sports Editor



**Brian Plamondon**  
Sports Writer

This game will go the way the Notre Dame defense wants it to.

If defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder's unit comes out with the intensity and scheme it used to brilliantly stop Georgia Tech's triple-option attack last month, there's no reason the Irish can't run away with a big victory to set the tone for the rest of the year.

But if Notre Dame comes out with defensive intensity like it had early against Massachusetts or Clemson, it could lead to a tight game that comes down to the final possession or two.

DeShone Kizer and C.J. Prosise shouldn't have an issue being productive on offense, so this one is squarely on the shoulders of an experienced defense.

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 38, Navy 24

After last week's loss to Clemson, Brian Kelly's message to the team wasn't positive — instead of talking to his team about the fight they put up, he harped on his disappointment in the Irish since they didn't seize the opportunity they had.

Notre Dame is a football team looking for vengeance, and it just so happens to be Navy that it's going to take it out on. Under any other scenario, I would be wary of Navy, but not with how mad the Irish are: Just ask Joe Schmidt, who said no one would smile for a week following Clemson.

Points won't be hard to come by for the Irish; instead, the most intriguing part of this game will be how the Irish contain Navy's Keenan Reynolds, a quarterback who throws far less than even Georgia Tech.

**FINAL SCORE:** Notre Dame 45, Navy 21

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# Irish players look forward to renewing



Observer File Photo

Former Notre Dame receiver Derrick Mayes gestures in an Oct. 29, 1994, game against Navy at Notre Dame Stadium, which the Irish won, 58-21. Mayes brought in two receiving touchdowns in the victory.

By ZACH KLONSINSKI  
Sports Editor

For the 89th consecutive year, No. 15 Notre Dame and Navy will meet on the gridiron in a rivalry that contains more respect than animosity.

"It's a huge rivalry," Irish junior linebacker Jaylon Smith said. "You have tons of respect for them. And it's just anytime you get a chance to play against a great team like Navy, who represents something so much more than football, it's just an honor to be a part of."

"It's a huge honor," Irish graduate student cornerback Matthias Farley said. "It's a lot different than any other game you play for a lot of reasons, the triple-option being one of them, but also these guys are playing football and preparing to go out and serve our country and protect our country."

Although the two teams have played every year since 1926, the Irish (4-1) have traditionally dominated the Midshipmen (4-0, 2-0 AAC), leading the series by a margin of 75-12-1. That includes a 43-game winning streak from 1964 through 2006

before Navy pulled off a 46-44, triple-overtime victory in 2007.

But for the first time in series history, other than when the two teams met in Dublin at the beginning of the 2012 season, Saturday's matchup is the first time neither team has more than one loss.

"[Navy head coach Ken Niumatalolo has] developed not only his offense to the point where they compete nationally, but their defense as well has developed," Irish head coach Brian Kelly said Tuesday. "It's played the kind of defense that I think a top-25 team plays."

Despite being an annual fixture since before the Great Depression, the series took on new meaning during World War II. With many college-aged students serving in the war overseas and Notre Dame struggling financially, the U.S. Navy made the University a training center, keeping it afloat.

The relationship went both ways, too, as many Notre Dame students, including 1947 Heisman Trophy winner John Lujack, served in the Navy during the war.

Irish players acknowledged the tough schedule

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Observer File Photo

Former Irish receiver Maurice Stovall pulls in a touchdown catch during Notre Dame's 42-21 victory over Navy on Nov. 12, 2005.

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# historic rivalry with Midshipmen

the Academy's midshipmen, including the football players, have every day.

"They have football and the Naval Academy," senior defensive lineman Sheldon Day said. "We have respect for the grind they go through."

"To them, probably [football's] an outlet to get away," Irish graduate student offensive lineman Nick Martin said. "Obviously what they do is unbelievable, and the respect we have for them is the utmost."

"They're a tough team, and they always play hard," said junior receiver Corey Robinson, whose father, David, attended the Naval Academy. "Those guys are crazy. I thought I was busy, right? Those guys are busy. I don't even know how they sleep. Everything they do, they demand excellence in."

Even University President Emeritus Fr. Theodore Hesburgh dreamed of serving as a Navy chaplain in World War II. Hesburgh, in an interview in 2013, said there was never a formal document or agreement signed saying the two sides should play every year.

"It just happened — it's one of those unspoken

traditions," Hesburgh said. "I think myself and the guys who came before and after me as president never had the slightest doubt that they ought to keep playing Navy."

While Navy is not considered a traditional powerhouse by any stretch of the imagination, the Irish all agree the Midshipmen will give Notre Dame all it can handle Saturday afternoon.

"It's hard to put into words," Martin said. "It's a fun game. It's an all-out war, it's a battle up front. Always is. You have two teams that are going to fight to the finish each play. It's fun."

The last time the Irish welcomed Navy to Notre Dame Stadium, the game featured a fly-over by the Blue Angels, the first appearance by the elite fighter group since the government restarted after its shutdown that summer.

This week the respect the game has on both sides will be visually represented by both coaching staffs wearing the same outfits, and players for both teams will don the same gloves, cleats and undershirts.

Contact Zach Klonsinski at [zklonsin@nd.edu](mailto:zklonsin@nd.edu)



Observer File Photo

Former Irish running back Darius Walker finds a hole in the Navy defense during Notre Dame's game against the Midshipmen on Nov. 12, 2005, a 42-21 Irish victory at Notre Dame Stadium.

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- Dorothy Day

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Observer File Photo

Former Notre Dame linebacker Manti Te'o brings down a Navy runner during the 56-14 win against the Midshipmen on Oct. 29, 2011.

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# Reynolds heads to ND nearing NCAA record



Observer File Photo

*Navy senior quarterback Keenan Reynolds (19) celebrates a play during Notre Dame's 38-34 victory over the Midshipmen on Nov. 2, 2013, at Notre Dame Stadium. Reynolds has recorded 73 career rushing touchdowns in his time at the Naval Academy, sitting just four scores away from tying the all-time NCAA record for rushing touchdowns.*

By **MARY GREEN**

Assistant Managing Editor

Facing Navy senior quarterback Keenan Reynolds is nothing new for Notre Dame: The Irish have done it each of the past three years, the last two as the Midshipmen's starter.

That doesn't make the team's task any easier this Saturday, though.

Reynolds spearheads the triple-option offense showcased by Navy (4-0, 2-0 AAC), leading the team's rush-heavy attack with 122 yards per game on the ground and nine scores. He and senior running back Chris Swain have combined to take 155 of the Midshipmen's 234 total carries this season and 849 of the team's 1,359 total rushing yards.

"You feel like you can't say enough good things about their quarterback," Irish graduate student linebacker Joe Schmidt said. "He does a good job running their system, getting them in and out of the right plays. He's careful with the football."

The Irish (4-1) have already faced a similar challenge earlier this season in stopping Georgia Tech redshirt junior quarterback Justin Thomas, who they were able to hold to 27 rushing yards and 121 passing yards.

Senior defensive lineman Sheldon Day said the team's previous experience against the triple option has given it the key to how to control it.

"Stop the big play going up the middle for a lot of yards or stopping the quarterback. It's about giving them different looks and making sure we confuse them as best as possible," Day said.

Georgia Tech head coach Paul Johnson installed the triple option at Navy when he was the head coach there from 2002 to 2007, and Ken

Niumatalolo, the team's current head coach, has kept it in place in his eight years in Annapolis.

"We know we've got our hands full to stop a very potent offensive attack," Kelly said. "Coach [Niumatalolo] does a great job of utilizing multiple formations, multiple looks in running their offense. Obviously, the quarterback has played against us for four years. We're very aware of him and have a great deal of respect for the Naval Academy and what they represent."

The Irish are also aware — some to a higher degree than others — of a milestone Reynolds is currently chasing as he closes out his four years at the Naval Academy. The quarterback, who has scored 73 career rushing touchdowns, is five more runs to the end zone short of breaking former Wisconsin running back Montee Ball's all-time NCAA record of 77. Reynolds' current mark is second-most all-time and the most of any quarterback in history.

"I think I heard earlier in the week that he's closing in on a record, so anytime you're able to do that as a player he's definitely done a lot of things right," Schmidt said. "Tremendous amount of respect as a player, and we're looking forward to playing him on Saturday."

However, Kelly said it's important to Notre Dame's cause that Reynolds doesn't make history so soon.

"We certainly don't want him to get the record, although it's a great achievement," Kelly said. "If he's to get that record, they're going to have a great day here, and we can't afford for him to do that."

The 5-foot-11, 205-pound quarterback leads the offense that has outscored its

opponents' in its last eight consecutive games and 10 of its last 11. Reynolds is also the winningest starting quarterback in program history, with 25 career victories

under his belt.

"They will play harder and longer than anybody else, and that's our challenge: We need to match that and do everything we can to try to

exceed that, and that's an incredible job for us," Schmidt said.

Contact Mary Green at [mgreen8@nd.edu](mailto:mgreen8@nd.edu)

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CHRIS COLLINS | The Observer

Sophomore quarterback DeShone Kizer waits for the snap from graduate student center Nick Martin in last week's loss to Clemson.



CHRIS COLLINS | The Observer

Graduate student receiver Amir Carlisle looks for an opening during a play in Notre Dame's 24-22 loss to Clemson last Saturday at Memorial Stadium in Clemson, South Carolina.



KAT ROBINSON | The Observer

Freshman running back Josh Adams rushes toward the end zone during the 62-27 Irish victory over Massachusetts on Sept. 25 at Notre Dame Stadium.

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CHRIS COLLINS | The Observer

Junior receiver Will Fuller looks for extra yardage after a catch against Clemson in Notre Dame's road loss to the Tigers last Saturday.



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