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Weis here to win

'My job here is to raise [the] expectations.'

By HEATHER VAN HOEGARDEN
News Writer

When he was unemployed 15 years ago, a job as the Notre Dame head football coach was the farthest thing from his mind. But Sunday, things came full circle for Charlie Weis, as he was named the head football coach at his alma mater, signing a six-year deal.

"This is obviously a high-profile, big-time job, but it's one that I, a long, long time ago thought 'wouldn't that be something if you could ever be the head coach at Notre Dame,'" Weis, a 1978 Notre Dame graduate who didn't play football for the Irish, said at Monday's press conference. "You know when we all grow up we have aspirations."

Weis, was without a job in 1989 after South Carolina coach Joe Morrison died, and as a result, he lost his assistant job. He then became a high school head coach for a year before coaching in the NFL. The last five years, Weis has been the offensive coordinator of the New England Patriots, winning two Super Bowl titles.

"At the University of Notre Dame, the success in our football program consists of three things—acting with integrity, giving our students a superb education and excelling on the field," University President-elect Father John Jenkins said. "Meeting all of these goals is a tremendous challenge. But I believe we have found a person in Charlie Weis who can lead us to such multifaceted success."

Weis said he didn't come to Notre Dame to lose football games. He expects nothing less than winning football games in a program that hasn't posted back-to-back winning seasons since 1997 and 1998 under Bob Davie.

"You are what you are folks, right now you're a 6-5 football team," Weis said. "And guess what — that's just not good enough. That's not good enough for you, and it's certainly not going to be good enough for me.

"So if you think they hired me to go .500, you've got the wrong guy."

Weis especially emphasized the new attitude he wants to bring to Notre Dame. He knows the Irish play a tough schedule, playing four of the first five games on road next season, including Michigan and Pittsburgh. But despite claims that the schedule is too tough, Weis wants his team to play with arrogance, a sense that

see WEIS/page 2

CLAIRE KELLEY/The Observer

Notre Dame formally announced Charlie Weis as the 28th head coach of the Irish Monday. Weis, current offensive coordinator of the New England Patriots, graduated from Notre Dame in 1978.

Monk clarifies remarks, supports Weis

By MATT LOZAR
News Writer

After expressing public embarrassment last week about the decision to fire Tyrone Willingham, University President Father Edward Malloy explained his attention-grabbing remarks Monday and offered his support for Charlie Weis.

"I was not a definitive voice and I was not the one who initiated the action. The impression had been gained that I was, and I was simply trying to clarify the record that I wasn't and had a disagreement about that choice," Malloy said. "But people of goodwill can disagree about such matters, and I don't want that to stand in the way of good relationship with coach Weis."

During the course of the football season, Malloy met with Irish athletic director Kevin White on many occasions to discuss the direction of the program. Malloy felt the University had chosen Willingham as its coach and barring tragic events that coach should have a time span that is generally five years.

Malloy made his comments at the panel titled "Role of the President or Chancellor in Overseeing Intercollegiate Athletics" at the Sports Business Journal's Intercollegiate Athletics Forum. He was on the panel along with presidents from Ohio State and Vanderbilt and Myles Brand, president of the NCAA.

In June 2001, the Knight Commission published "A Call to Action: Reconnecting College Sports and Higher Education." Monday, Malloy cited one of the report's principles that states the responsibility and authority for the administration of the athletics department are vested in the president. This includes issues related to basic policies, personnel and finances.

"I was in a long-established commitment for a conference in New York," Malloy said. "The other people that were on it were all people I know. The things we talked about were all serious.

"I knew I was probably going to be asked and was expecting that. I wanted to clarify my position, which I felt I did, and I have nothing else to say about that."

GEOFF MATTESON/The Observer

University President Father Edward Malloy responds to questions.

During this presidential transition process, long-term decisions like a football coaching change affect both the current and future administrations. Malloy deferred to University President-elect Father John Jenkins at this time, following University President Emeritus Theodore Hesburgh's example.

"I feel in the administration here we have a very harmonious group," Malloy said. "The transition has gone well with Father Jenkins, and I have talked about all the significant matters along the way and when I pass along the mantle. I have great confidence in the job he'll do and all the people who assist him."

After the turmoil during the past two weeks, Jenkins feels Notre Dame is "absolutely" ready to put all of the criticism behind it and move on. He said Notre Dame is ready to put it in the rearview mirror and move forward.

see MALLOY/page 3

White outlines extensive search

By MATT LOZAR
News Writer

Notre Dame athletic director Kevin White claims he doesn't know any of the details about the nationwide media speculation surrounding the Irish coaching search.

He didn't ready any of the articles.

"I've had the blinders on. I haven't read any of your articles. I really haven't. I'm sure some of them were terrific and some weren't very good. I can't speak to that," White said. "What I can tell you is my focus has been on hiring the next football coach. I worked really hard not to be defocused by everything that's going on."

Over the 10-day search, White said Monday there were an unquantifiable number of conversations with potential prospects in the college and NFL worlds. The University utilized one outside search consultant, Gene Corrigan, a former Notre Dame athletic director and former commissioner of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

White said five candidates were interviewed formally for the head coach position left vacant by the Nov. 30 firing of Tyrone Willingham.

Two candidates had conversations with University representatives about specific compensation details.

On Friday, a number of different groups talked by phone with coach Charlie Weis before the offer was made that evening.

The student-athlete transition team of Victor Abiamiri, Anthony Fasano, Brady Quinn, Brandon Hoyte, Justin Tuck and Ryan Harris talked with

see WHITE/page 3

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The Observer will resume publishing Jan. 12, 2005. The staff wishes everyone good luck on finals. Happy Holidays.

Students voice optimism about Weis

By CLAIRE HEININGER
News Editor

If first impressions are any indication, new head football coach Charlie Weis and the Notre Dame student body will make a strong match.

Whether or not they favored the firing of former coach Tyrone Willingham, most students were optimistic Monday about the football program's chance to leave behind the controversy of the past two weeks and move forward under its new leader.

"[Weis] seems like he's a football guy — he's going to put a system in place, relate to the players," sophomore Adam Higgins said. "I don't think anyone disliked [Willingham] as a man, but he wasn't getting it done as a football coach. I think [Weis] will."

Senior Nick Moller agreed that from a purely football standpoint, Weis seemed to be an improvement on his predecessor — but should be held to an identical standard of performance.

"I think he's been working with one of the most successful programs in the country, so hopefully he can bring that to Notre Dame," Moller said. "[But] it's going to take wins on the football field ... if Charlie Weis can't perform, he should be fired, and we should bring someone else in."

It is "absolutely" a realistic possibility for the Weis-led Irish to return to national championship contention, Moller said.

> *"[Weis] seems like he's a football guy — he's going to put a system in place, relate to the players"*
>
> **Adam Higgins**
> **sophomore**

And while Weis will have to contend with the notion that he was Notre Dame's second choice — after Utah's Urban Meyer, who signed with the Florida Gators last week — students expressed confidence in the selection of the new coach.

"When we didn't get [Meyer], I started to be against [firing Willingham] because I didn't want us to get our second choice again [after the 2001 George O'Leary episode]," sophomore Robbie Rhinesmith said. "But Charlie Weis seems like a good second choice ... he seemed like a very straightforward guy, and he'll do a good job with the X's and O's."

Freshman Michael Verdeyen, who followed the coaching search, said he and his friends had mixed feelings about the hiring but looked forward to the offensive magic the coordinator could bring to South Bend.

"He taught Tom Brady a lot, so hopefully he can coach Brady Quinn," Verdeyen said.

Interacting with players should be — and already seems to be — Weis' priority, said sophomore Chris Sergio.

"He's going to come in strong and not take less than the best from the players," Sergio said. "Not that he'll boss them around and be a super bad guy, but get it done on and off the field."

Players loved Willingham, Sergio said, but the former coach did not accumulate the on-field record Notre Dame requires.

"[Firing Willingham] was kind of a necessary step to get us where the University wants to go with the football program," he said. "But "[Willingham] did some great things off the field and I really respect him for all that he did."

In the eyes of senior Sarah Wallace, it will be difficult for Weis to immediately achieve the same level of respect.

"I think [Willingham] was a more likeable person to watch talk, so unless this new coach puts out a lot of wins, he's not going to compete with me," Wallace said. "It seems like the people in charge are willing to hurt a lot of feelings and put winning before everything else."

Sergio disagreed.

"It's not necessarily all about winning," he said. "But both sides [of athletics and academics] have to be considered ... and from what I saw it looks like Weis can take care of both."

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CLAIRE KELLEY/The Observer

University President Elect Father John Jenkins, left, and University President Father Edward Malloy listen to Weis.

Weis

continued from page 1

they can beat anyone they play.

"Doesn't make any difference whatever night or day they schedule them — we play them," Weis said. "That includes being able to win on the road, and it goes back to having that toughness and playing smart and playing disciplined and playing nasty and going in there with an arrogant attitude.

"Doesn't make any difference where you go, you intend on beating them."

Weis will now have to balance his time between Notre Dame and New England. The Patriots' season could last until the Super Bowl on Feb. 6. He would not disclose specifics about how he will split time, but he said he is confident in his ability to recruit, even while holding both jobs.

"One of the initial things we are going to have to do is get a foundation of a coaching staff that's in-house, on-site, that while there's some going back and forth between places of which schedule I won't talk about, I could have a foundation set," said Weis, who also said he will not be attending the Insight Bowl.

Weis, the first Notre Dame graduate to be a head coach at the University since Hugh Devore served as interim coach in 1963, said his knowledge of Notre Dame will serve to his advantage.

"Well, when you go talk to a guy about coming to school here, it isn't like you don't know," Weis said. "If you try to recruit a guy — I know, I've been here."

In the meantime, Weis said he will focus his attention on the current Irish players.

"I come here with a plan, and the plan is [that] the first thing you've got to do is you've go to take care of the guys you already have here," he said. "Everyone wants to hear about recruits, but they forget about the players that are already here."

For Weis, after he is finished with New England's season, Notre Dame is the end of the road.

"I also owe the New England Patriots and the people from New England to give them my best until their season is over, because once their season is over, my NFL career is over and I'm the head coach of the University of Notre Dame full time until the day I retire, and that's what my intent is," Weis said.

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Concerns still remain in Irish community

By CLAIRE HEININGER
News Editor

Despite the hiring of Charlie Weis, some members of the Notre Dame community who vocally opposed the firing of Tyrone Willingham said Monday that their concerns still linger.

Paula Higgins, a music professor who initially sponsored the Faculty Senate's Dec. 6 resolution against the firing, said on the face of it, Willingham's dismissal still appears to be the wrong choice. Her shock at the decision's abruptness and exclusivity — not to mention the negative external attention it brought the University — has yet to fade.

"This is our University," said Higgins, who observed a dramatic increase in academic performance among the football players she taught during Willingham's tenure. "[The firing] seemed to suggest that winning is more important than academics. After all, Notre Dame is not the NFL — even though some people want it to be."

But the fact that Weis is an NFL coach does not necessarily speak for his academic credentials, Higgins acknowledged.

"He's a Domer, he knows the drill," she said of the 1978 graduate. "One would hope he understands the importance of academics at this University ... I think he deserves all of our support."

Though he stood front and center at the Weis announcement, Faculty Board on Athletics chair Fernand Dutile said afterward he stood by the board's Friday statement about its concerns over Willingham's termination. The statement listed speed, timing, a lack of faculty involvement and the role of two members of the Board of Trustees as the faculty board's chief concerns about the decision.

The statement also asked University President Father Edward Malloy and University President Elect Father John Jenkins to meet with the board. Both have agreed to do so, and will hold separate meetings because of scheduling reasons, Dutile said.

However, Dutile expressed satisfaction with his inclusion in the hiring process.

"I was continually involved in the search," he said. "I talked to [Weis] personally about the academic concerns of my job ... in my view, he represents commitment to integrity, academic success and athletic success."

Tim Kelley, a 1964 Notre Dame graduate who helped author a letter to the Board of Trustees last winter that criticized the University's management of the football program, echoed Dutile's endorsement.

"It appears there was a fairly well-managed selection process as opposed to what happened in the past," Kelley said.

Kelley refused to take credit for influencing the coaching change, but said other alumni he had spoken with were pleased with Weis' Notre Dame ties.

"He's a Notre Dame graduate and he understands the issues ... I think he is probably in a better position than past coaches to do it the Notre Dame way," Kelley said. "He's one of us."

That mentality is troubling to Higgins, who said the University's core academic and athletic values are jeopardized by outside pressures — alumni included.

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IRISH INSIDER

Tuesday, December 14, 2004

THE OBSERVER

PLAYING FOR PRIDE

The Irish hope to finish the season on a high note by ending the school's six-bowl game losing streak

2004 INSIGHT BOWL

Notre Dame vs. Oregon State

Photo Illustration by MIKE HARKINS and CLAIRE KELLEY

This game still matters a lot

The Insight Bowl is a chance for the Irish to finish strong

Joe Hettler

Sports Writer

Does it even matter?

Does playing in the Copper, er, Insight Bowl matter to Notre Dame?

Should it matter?

Does it matter, even after Notre Dame fired head coach Tyrone Willingham Nov. 30?

Does it matter, even if the Irish coaching staff is a bunch of lame ducks, coaching the Dec. 28 game and then leaving when new head coach Charlie Weis brings in his own guys?

Does it matter, even if the two teams playing are 6-5 and the game is being played inside a baseball stadium?

Actually, yes. It does matter.

Notre Dame does have some motivation when the team travels to Phoenix to face Oregon State a few days after Christmas.

First, they can win a bowl game — even it is a former .com bowl game. The Irish haven't won a postseason game since the first day of January in 1994, a 24-21 victory against Texas A&M. Since then, Notre Dame either hasn't played in a bowl game (see 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003) or hasn't won a bowl game (see 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002). No Notre Dame team since 1993 has ended a winning season with a significant victory. Changing that trend would give the team some momentum heading into the off-season.

Either way, a win would be a positive means of ending a turbulent season.

Notre Dame also has extra motivation by looking at the opponent on the other sidelines. Oregon State, if you don't remember, embarrassed Notre Dame in the 2001 Fiesta Bowl, creaming the Irish 41-9. This season's senior class hasn't forgotten that blowout. A win against the Beavers could make the previous loss hurt a little less.

The Irish can send their seniors off with a win. This group has been through one of the toughest, if not the toughest, stretches on the gridiron in Notre Dame's storied history.

[The Irish] have faced many obstacles, and they've been through many hardships. A bowl game victory would be a deserving way for the class members to end their careers.

They've seen Bob Davie, then George O'Leary, then Willingham and now Weis as the head coach. They've faced many obstacles, and they've been through many hardships. A bowl game victory would be a deserving way for the class members to end their careers.

A Notre Dame win would, perhaps, help recruiting too. Recruits watching the game may be more attracted to the Irish, after seeing them battle through the controversy of the Willingham firing and then still finding a path to victory in the Insight Bowl.

So there it is, a few reasons why Notre Dame does have something to play for on Dec. 28. Sure, the Insight Bowl isn't the Fiesta, Rose, Orange or Sugar Bowl. It's not even the Gator or Cotton for that matter.

But it is a bowl game. It does give Notre Dame a chance to win a football game. To end its season with a much-needed victory. To give the Weis era a little momentum heading into the new coach's first season in 2005.

The Irish are what they are at this point in the season — an inconsistent 6-5 team that has shown flashes of greatness, and flashes of ineptitude. For all the difficulties this season has presented, Notre Dame can push the negatives away and focus on ending the season on a high note.

With the Irish falling so rapidly from college football's elite programs during the last decade, it's critical to begin turning the program around. Lou Holtz's 1996 team finished the season at 8-3, and turned down bowl bid invitations. Things certainly have changed since then.

But with Weis stepping in, the program can begin to regain some prominence. While a win in the Insight Bowl wouldn't be, by any means, groundbreaking, it could be the start of a slow, gradual improvement of the Irish football program.

Does this game even matter?

Yes, it does.

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

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game hype

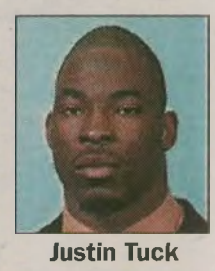
Kent Baer
interim head coach

"Anytime you go to a bowl game you're excited. We get to go down there and show the country what kind of team we have."

Kyle Budinscak
Irish defensive end

"For those of us who have followed football for a while, Notre Dame has a special place in college football."

"We're playing a team that's pretty hungry. ... It's going to be a challenge. Our guys are ready to play them.



Justin Tuck
Irish defensive end

"They've got great skill-position guys. Four years ago it was the same case. They're real strong up front so it will be a challenge."

Mike Riley
Oregon State head coach

Irish hope to avoid repeat of 2001 Fiesta Bowl

Notre Dame lost 41-9 to Beavers in first and only BCS game in school history

By MATT LOZAR
Sports Writer

It's not about revenge, but the details are too coincidental to discount the obvious.

"I don't know about revenge. It's hard to take out revenge on guys you haven't seen in four years," Irish fifth-year senior Kyle Budinscak said. "I think I definitely don't want to have the taste in my mouth finishing my career that I had when I first got here. It's funny how things work."

"It's the same city, the same timing, against the same team. I don't know exactly what that means. I would hate to end my career the way it kind of began."

While revenge isn't on the forefront of motivational tools for Dec. 28's Insight Bowl game against Oregon State, four years after the Beavers destroyed the Irish 41-9 in the 2001 Fiesta Bowl, the memories of that "Fiasco Bowl" aren't forgotten.

The score was only 12-3 at halftime, but in the third quarter, Oregon State scored 29 unanswered points en route to amassing 446 total yards of offense compared to Notre Dame's 155.

"I remember freshman year. I didn't participate, [but] basically we got our butts kicked. It's not how you want to go out." Irish fifth-year defensive lineman Greg Pauly said. "It's not like we're looking for payback. This is a big game for us, and we're going out there and playing like that."

Over the past five years, the Irish have not had the best finishes to their seasons. In 1999 they lost their last four games. In 2000 there was the Fiesta Bowl loss. In 2001 they won their last game but Bob Davie was fired the next day.

During the Willingham era, in 2002 the Irish were blown out by Southern California and North Carolina State and in 2003, a 5-6 Syracuse team embarrassed the Irish 38-12.

This game gives the Irish another opportunity to avoid ending their season with a bad loss.

"I think this team is full of competitors, and that's who we are, and that's what we're going to do, whether were playing in the national championship game or the Insight Bowl," Irish offensive lineman Dan Stevenson said. "Right now, I think you have to play for pride. ... There's a lot to show about this team. It sets up next year."

One big key in this game is going to be the Irish secondary against the Oregon State passing attack.

The Beavers rank eighth in the country in passing per game, averaging 304.4 yards per game.

The Irish have allowed a total of 10 touchdown passes in the past two games.

Irish interim coach Kent Baer said Friday he isn't too concerned about the recent performance of the secondary.

"I think they're fine. We got a lot of pride. I like the group. Quentin Burrell is our leader. The rest of those guys will rally around him," Baer said. "They're going to be fine. Some of the things that happened in the last couple of games, they schemed us pretty good a couple of times. We've learned from a lot from those games."

A lot has been talked about what this team has left to play for — pride, the old coaching staff, a winning record — but the leaders of this team are taking a pretty basic approach.

"Our goal is to try to go out, and what we've talked about as the leaders of this team and a lot of the guys that are going to play a lot, and take it to another level, let it all hang out and play the best game we've played all year and let's really do it," Budinscak said. "There's no pressure, we have nothing to worry about. Let's take it to another level and surprise everyone."

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KRT

Oregon State quarterback Jonathan Smith avoids Notre Dame's Tony Driver, No. 25, and Jason Beckstrom, No. 27, during the Beavers' 41-9 victory over the Irish in the 2001 Fiesta Bowl.

Still a lot to play for

Irish hope to win Insight Bowl for Willingham, for the University and for themselves

By HEATHER VAN HOEGARDEN
Sports Editor

For some, it's a chance to get a win. For others, it is the last time they will put on a Notre Dame uniform. But for most, it is an important football game.

When Irish coach Tyrone Willingham was fired on Nov. 30, his team had a decision to make. Would they honor the commitment they made just two days earlier to play in the Insight Bowl? Or would they back out of the contract?

Under the leadership of its seniors, this team decided to play. So now, with former defensive coordinator Kent Baer as their interim head coach, the Irish (6-5) travel to Bank One Ballpark in Phoenix to take on Oregon State Dec. 28.

Notre Dame isn't playing for a national championship, and they aren't playing to move up in the top-25, but don't tell this team this game isn't important. In fact, the players are all playing for one thing — a win. But each has approached it differently.

"Coach Baer said we needed to do this one for coach Willingham and the University," Irish running back Darius Walker said. "The University has been through some times this year, and we really want to go out there and win this one for the University. We also want to win it for ourselves."

Bowl-game drought

It has been 10 seasons since Notre Dame has ended its year with a bowl win. The last win for Notre Dame came in the Jan. 1, 1994, Cotton Bowl when the Irish beat Texas A&M 24-21. For the fifth-year seniors, the Insight Bowl is an opportunity for them to leave on a positive note after seeing three coaches in five years.

Senior defensive end Justin Tuck said Baer brought up the fact that Notre Dame hasn't won a bowl game in so long.

"It's been over a decade that we haven't had a bowl game win," said Tuck, who has one year of eligibility remaining. "That's our focus. We want to go down there and get a win. It's not about we got a bowl game and all the hoopla. This is a focused football team."

Senior Mike Goolsby doesn't want his season to end as it did his freshman year — with a loss to Oregon State. As a true freshman, Goolsby saw the Irish get beat 41-9 in the Fiesta Bowl by the Beavers in 2001.

> *"We got our butts kicked [against Oregon State in the 2001 Fiesta Bowl], and I remember them calling it the Fiasco Bowl. We are trying not to let that happen again."*
>
> **Mike Goolsby**
> **Irish linebacker**

"We got our butts kicked, and I remember them calling it the Fiasco Bowl," Goolsby said. "We are trying not to let that happen again.

"It's ironic for the fifth-year guys that our first bowl game as freshmen is going to be our last bowl game playing the same team. It's our last chance to get a shot. I never got to beat Boston College, so this is one of those types of deals. It's your last opportunity."

Something to build on

Last year, their season ended with a 38-12 loss to Syracuse. The year before it ended with a 28-6 loss to North Carolina State in the Gator Bowl. In fact, Notre Dame has not won its last game since 2001, when Bob Davie's team beat Purdue 24-18, the last game Davie coached at Notre Dame.

The Insight Bowl is an opportunity for this team to end a roller coaster season on a positive note, following a 41-10 loss at USC Nov. 27, the third straight 31-point loss to the Trojans.

"USC we didn't finish on a good note, and this is just one more chance to get everything going in the right direction and just make the spring and summer that much more exciting," Irish kicker D.J. Fitzpatrick said.

Irish offensive lineman Dan Stevenson said getting a win to end the year is especially important.

"You don't want to spend the entire offseason thinking about the last game," Stevenson said. "Whatever happens in the last game you keep that in the back of your mind. So it's huge for us to go out there and get a big win.

Stevenson said he thinks this Irish team still has something to prove to the rest of the college football world after a season in which the Irish knocked off two top-10 teams (Michigan and Tennessee), but also lost two tough home games (Boston College and Pittsburgh).

"It's a huge game, we want to go out there and show that we have a great team, great talent," he said. "I think everyone's writing us off, but we know better than that. We know what we have here, and its time for us to step up and show it."

Still a football game

Despite all the media attention Notre Dame and its football program has received in the weeks following the firing of Willingham, Irish players are excited to get back on the field to play the game they love.

"We're excited," Tuck said. "We get to go to a great bowl site in Phoenix. The coaches have set up a schedule where we're going to have a lot of fun. But in the same sense we're going to go down there and work and try to get a win. I think this football team is very excited with this opportunity."

Goolsby sees his last game as one final chance to show what he can do on the football field, while at the same time, preparing the younger players for their futures at Notre Dame. He won't need any extra motivation going into the game.

"Anytime you get an opportunity it's a chance to showcase what you've got," Goolsby said. "It's going to be a big-time game with a lot of guys watching. That's one way I want to look at it. But at the same time I want to win it for coach [Willingham] and for the younger guys so there's more than enough reasons to prepare well."

Budinscak, another fifth-year senior, said that for the seniors, it is a chance to show the world one last time what they can do.

"Obviously this thing might mean a lot more to us than it does to people around the program who are concerned with a lot of other things," Budinscak said. "I think we would love to as seniors go out and play the best game we've ever played, and try to amaze people with what we can do and have a great team effort. We want to go out on the right note."

And while the seniors play their last game for Notre Dame, other Irish players will be playing their first bowl game. Walker, a true freshman, is excited for the opportunity to play in a bowl.

"It's very exciting," Walker said. "Seeing all the bowl games on TV last year, that was something I really wanted to do. I'm excited, I'm thrilled. I'm pumped-up, ready to go. I just can't wait to get to Arizona where it's warm."

Contact Heather Van Hoegarden at hvanhoeg@nd.edu

CHUY BENITEZ/The Observer

The Irish sack Stanford quarterback Trent Edwards in a game earlier this season. Against Oregon State's potent passing attack, the Notre Dame defense will have to get pressure on the quarterback.

CLAIRE KELLEY/The Observer

The Notre Dame defensive line gets a push against the Michigan offensive line earlier this season. The Irish have held their opponents to low rush totals all season, and hope to do the same to Oregon State.

by the numbers

1994 — The last year that Notre Dame won a bowl game; the victory was a 24-21 victory over Texas A&M in the Cotton Bowl

6 — Number of bowl games Notre Dame has lost since that Cotton Bowl victory.

41 — Number of points Notre Dame allowed against Oregon State in the teams' last matchup — the 2001 Fiesta Bowl, which the Irish lost 41-9

114 — Notre Dame's rank, out of 117 Division I football teams, in passing defense (274.3 yards per game)

8 — Oregon State's national rank in passing offense (304.4 yards per game)

75.3 — Number of rushing yards Oregon State averages per game, second worst in the nation behind Iowa

94.4 — Number of rushing yards the Notre Dame defense gives up per game

10 — Average AP ranking of the five opponents who have defeated Oregon State this season; the Beavers lost to USC (No. 1), California (No. 4), Boise State (No. 10), LSU (No. 12) and Arizona State (No. 21)

Notre Dame
Fighting Irish

Record: 6-5
AP: NR
Coaches: NR

HEAD T

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Kent Baer
interim head coach

Kent Baer
interim coach at Notre Dame
career record: 0-0
at Notre Dame: 0-0
against Oregon State: 0-0

Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	YR
1	Jared Clark	TE	6-4	250	SR
2	Freddie Parrish	DB	6-1	202	SO
3	Darius Walker	RB	5-11	200	FR
4	Ryan Grant	RB	6-1	218	SR
5	Rhema McKnight	WR	6-1	215	JR
6	Carlos Campbell	CB	5-11	195	SR
7	Carlyle Holiday	WR/QB	6-3	215	SR
8	Marty Mooney	QB	6-2	210	JR
8	Quentin Burrell	FS	6-0	195	SR
9	Tom Zbikowski	DB	5-11	203	SO
9	Pat Dillingham	QB	6-2	205	SR
10	Brady Quinn	QB	6-4	224	SO
11	Marcus Wilson	RB	5-11	202	SR
12	Josh Schmidt	FB	6-1	232	SR
13	David Wolke	QB	6-4	205	FR
15	Preston Jackson	CB	5-9	180	SR
16	Rashon Powers-Neal	FB	6-2	243	SR
16	Stan Revelle	QB	5-11	195	SR
17	Geoffrey Price	P	6-3	190	SR
17	J.J. Warren	QB	6-1	184	SO
18	Darren Bragg	QB	6-2	185	FR
18	Chinedum Ndukwe	DB	6-2	223	SO
19	D.J. Fitzpatrick	K/P	6-1	200	SR
21	Maurice Stovall	WR	6-5	227	JR
22	Ambrose Wooden	CB	5-11	186	SO
23	Chase Anastasio	WR	6-1	202	SO
24	Dwight Ellick	CB	5-10	185	SR
25	Nate Schiccatano	FB	6-2	242	JR
26	Wade Iams	DB	5-8	170	FR
26	Travis Thomas	RB	6-0	212	SO
27	Lionel Bolen	DB	6-0	210	SR
27	John Lyons	RB	6-1	192	SO
28	Tregg Duerson	DB	5-10	170	FR
28	Cole Laux	FB	5-10	240	SR
30	Mike Richardson	DB	5-11	190	JR
31	Jake Carney	FS	6-0	192	JR
31	A.J. Cedeno	DB	6-0	191	SO
32	Jeff Jenkins	RB	6-0	216	JR
33	Justin Hoskins	RB	6-0	195	FR
34	Terrail Lambert	DB	5-10	190	FR
37	Junior Jabbie	DB	5-11	190	FR
37	Matt Mitchell	CB	5-9	190	JR
38	Leo Ferrine	DB	6-0	180	FR
39	Brandon Hoyte	LB	5-11	231	SR
40	Maurice Crum, Jr.	LB	6-1	215	FR
41	Mike Goolsby	LB	6-4	242	SR
42	Anthony Vernaglia	LB	6-4	220	FR
43	Anthony Salvador	LB	6-2	232	JR
44	Justin Tuck	DE	6-5	261	SR
45	Carl Gioia	K/P	5-10	185	SO
45	Rich Whitney	DB	6-3	205	JR
46	Corey Mays	LB	6-1	243	SR
47	Mitchell Thomas	LB	6-3	230	SO
48	Jerome Collins	TE	6-4	258	SR
49	Derek Curry	LB	6-3	235	SR
50	Dan Santucci	OL	6-4	292	JR
51	Jamie Ryan	OL	6-5	310	JR
52	Joe Brockington	LB	6-1	225	SO
53	Dan Hickey	OL	6-3	224	JR
53	Joseph Boland	LB	6-3	224	JR
54	David Fitzgerald	OL	6-4	285	JR
55	Zachary Giles	C	6-3	281	SR
56	Nick Borseti	LB	6-4	238	SO
58	Abdel Banda	LB	6-2	215	FR
59	James Bent	OL	6-1	271	JR
59	Dan Chervanick	DT/NG	6-2	265	JR
60	Casey Cullen	LB	6-2	212	SO
61	J.J. Jansen	LS	6-3	215	FR
62	Scott Raridon	OT	6-6	310	JR
64	Casey Dunn	OL	6-4	256	SR
65	Tim Gritzman	DE	6-3	210	FR
66	Derek Landri	NG	6-2	278	JR
67	John Kadous	OL	6-7	310	FR
68	Ryan Harris	OL	6-5	289	SO
69	Darin Mitchell	OG	6-3	290	SR
70	Chauncey Incarnato	OL	6-6	280	FR
71	James Bonelli	OL	6-4	290	JR
72	Jeff Thompson	OL	6-4	285	SR
73	Mark LeVoir	OT	6-7	310	SR
74	Dan Stevenson	OG	6-5	293	SR
75	Chris Frome	DE	6-5	271	JR
76	Bob Morton	OG/C	6-4	300	JR
77	Greg Pauly	DT	6-6	295	SR
78	John Sullivan	C	6-3	295	SO
79	Brian Mattes	OL	6-5	292	JR
80	Chris Vaughn	WR	6-4	205	FR
81	Brandon Harris	WR	6-1	190	JR
82	Matt Shelton	WR	6-0	175	SR
83	Jeff Samardzija	WR	6-5	215	SO
84	Mike O'Hara	WR	5-9	175	JR
84	Rob Woods	WR	6-2	205	JR
85	Billy Palmer	TE	6-3	256	SR
87	Marcus Freeman	TE	6-2	248	JR
88	Anthony Fasano	TE	6-4	256	JR
89	John Carlson	TE	6-5	248	SO
90	Brian Beidatsch	DL	6-2	295	SR
91	Craig Cardillo	K	6-0	169	JR
92	Kyle Budinscak	DE	6-4	275	SR
93	Brandon Nicolas	DL	6-5	275	FR
94	Justin Brown	DL/LB	6-4	225	FR
95	Victor Abiamiri	DE	6-5	269	SO
96	Bobby Renkes	K/P	6-0	190	SO
97	Travis Leitko	DE	6-6	275	JR
98	Trevor Laws	DL	6-0	285	SO
99	Ronald Talley	DL	6-4	245	FR

NOTRE DAME 2004 Schedule

Sept. 4	at BYU - L
Sept. 11	MICHIGAN - W
Sept. 18	at Michigan St. - W
Sept. 25	WASHINGTON - W
Oct. 2	PURDUE - L
Oct. 9	STANFORD - W
Oct. 16	at NAVY - W
Oct. 23	BOSTON COLL. - L
Nov. 6	at Tennessee - W
Nov. 13	PITTSBURGH - L
Nov. 27	at USC - L

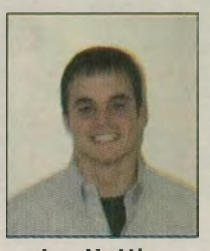
	Coaching	Quarterbacks	Irish Rushing	Irish Passing
Notre Dame	Baer will lead the team in his first, and last, game as coach of the Irish. As defensive coordinator during the regular season under the recently-fired Willingham, Baer's defense was strong against the run but poor against the pass.	Quinn has been up and down during the regular season, but has still had the best year of his career so far after throwing for 2,372 yards and 15 touchdowns. He has also shown flashes of being able to bring the ball down and run if the defense allows it.	The Irish have done well this season with a two-headed attack in senior Ryan Grant and freshman Darius Walker. The two backs were about all the offense the Irish could muster against USC, and Oregon State's run defense is not as good as USC's.	Notre Dame has had some good games passing this season and also some poor showings. Against the Trojans, the Irish threw for a season-low 105 yards. The team's rate of 218.2 yards per game is about average in Division I.
Oregon State	Riley has a losing record in two stints at Oregon State, and was not successful in the NFL as coach of the San Diego Chargers from 1999-2001. His team has played hard this season against ranked teams.	Anderson has had a fantastic year, throwing for 3,257 yards and 25 touchdowns. Both Quinn and Anderson completed 53 percent of their passes this season, but Anderson had 470 attempts to Quinn's 324 attempts.	The Beavers have done okay against the run, but they have also played a schedule full of pass-first Pac-10 teams. Oregon State has allowed an average of 122.6 yards per game this season and just nine rushing touchdowns.	The Beavers allow 194.1 yards per game, a pretty low average considering Oregon State is in the pass-happy Pac-10 conference. They are tied for fifth in the country with 18 interceptions, but have also allowed 23 touchdowns through the air.
Analysis	While Riley has never done much to prove his worth as a head coach, he still has six years of experience in both the NFL and at Oregon State. Baer, meanwhile, will be coaching his first game.	Anderson might have the more impressive stats, but he also has the advantage of Oregon State's complete lack of a running game. Neither team's pass defense is overly impressive, so both quarterbacks should have good nights.	Notre Dame shouldn't have too much difficulty running enough to keep the defense honest. Oregon State has faced very few teams with the rushing attack the Irish have, and when they did face good running teams (USC, California), they lost.	The Irish might have difficulty against the Beavers if Quinn makes poor decisions and throws interceptions. The Oregon State defense has been stellar against a schedule that is loaded with better passing teams than Notre Dame.

Irish experts

Matt Lozar
Editor in Chief

A lot of people would compare winning this game to Boston College and Pittsburgh — games the Irish shouldn't lose because of the leadership of their senior class. But that leadership can't overcome Notre Dame's inability to stop Oregon State's aerial attack. It won't be the Fiasco Bowl, but it won't be a happy ending.

FINAL SCORE: Oregon State 27, Notre Dame 17



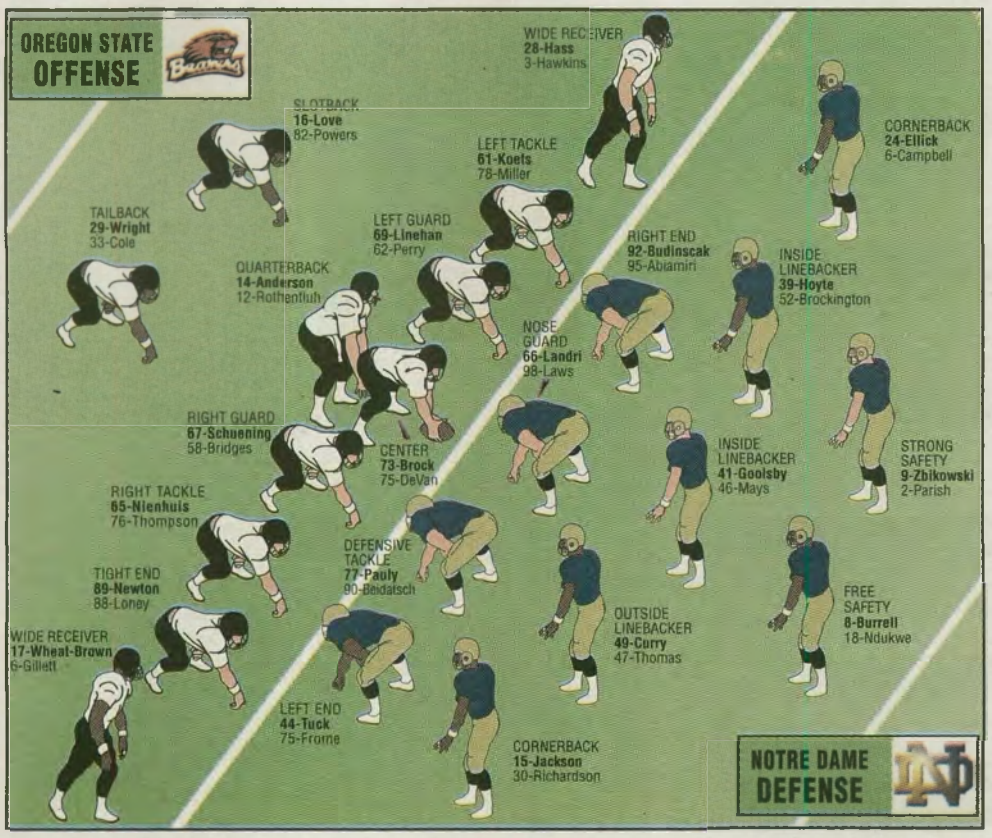
Joe Hettler
AME

What do I know? Probably not much. I picked the Irish to beat BYU, Purdue, BC, and Pitt, and lose to Michigan and Tennessee. So, I'll go with Oregon State in hopes I'm wrong yet again. Notre Dame needs to shut down the Beavers outstanding passing attack, while the Irish offense needs to rush the ball well against a vulnerable OSU run defense.

FINAL SCORE: Oregon State 31, Notre Dame 21

HEAD

Oregon State Beavers



OREGON STATE 2004 Schedule

Sept. 4	at LSU - L
Sept. 10	at Boise State - L
Sept. 18	NEW MEXICO - W
Sept. 25	at Arizona State - L
Oct. 2	CALIFORNIA - L
Oct. 16	at Washington - W
Oct. 23	WASHINGTON ST. - W
Oct. 30	at Arizona - W
Nov. 6	USC - L
Nov. 13	at Stanford - W
Nov. 20	OREGON - W

Oregon State Beavers

Record: 6-5
AP: NR
Coaches: NR

Mike Riley
fourth season at Oregon State
career record: 22-24
at Oregon State: 22-24
against Notre Dame: 0-0

Mike Riley
head coach

Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	YR
2	Brandon Browner	CB	6-4	202	SO
3	Josh Hawkins	WR	6-0	185	JR
4	Keith Ellison	LB	6-2	224	JR
4	Nick Bodeman	WR	5-11	180	JR
5	Mitch Meeuwsen	FS	6-3	205	SR
5	Brady Schlalich	QB	6-1	201	FR
6	George Gillett	WR	6-1	208	SR
6	Harvey Whiten	SS	6-3	219	JR
7	Colt Charles	QB	6-0	188	SO
7	Lamar Herron	DB	6-0	195	FR
8	Aric Williams	CB	6-0	172	SR
9	Gerard Lawson	CB	5-9	185	FR
10	John Dailey	PK	6-1	214	JR
10	Ryan Gunderson	QB	6-4	220	FR
12	Adam Rothenfluh	QB	6-3	187	SR
13	Blake Normine	WR	5-10	183	FR
13	Alexis Cerna	PK	5-7	157	FR
14	Derek Anderson	QB	6-6	240	SR
15	Brian Hildebrand	QB	6-2	203	FR
15	Kellen Marshall	CB	5-10	183	SO
16	Marcel Love	WR	6-0	181	JR
17	Anthony Wheat-Brown	WR	6-1	210	FR
18	Jimtavis Walker	RB	5-9	217	JR
19	Fredie Davis	CB	5-11	170	JR
19	Sammie Stroughter	WR	5-10	177	FR
20	Dallas Buck	DB	6-2	191	SO
21	Chaz Scott	LB	6-2	222	JR
22	Keller Christensen	LB	5-10	209	SR
23	Bryan Payton	CB	6-1	200	FR
24	Sabby Piscitelli	SS	6-3	217	SO
25	Nate Johns	WR	6-0	177	FR
26	Yvensen Bernard	TB	5-8	207	FR
27	Joe Lemma	DE	6-3	252	SO
28	Mike Hass	WR	6-1	210	JR
29	Dwight Wright	TB	5-9	208	SR
30	Charles Burnley	DB	6-0	180	FR
30	Michael Jones	TB	5-11	247	FR
31	Daniel Weis	RB/LB	6-0	222	FR
32	Jeff Kruskamp	TE	6-4	227	FR
33	Ryan Cole	TB	6-0	233	SO
34	Keenan Lewis	CB	6-1	172	FR
35	Sam Paulescu	P/PK	5-11	187	JR
36	Brandon Hughes	WR	5-10	167	FR
37	Matthew Sieverson	FS	6-1	200	FR
38	Olaniyi Sobomehin	RB	6-0	231	FR
39	Daniel Drayton	S	5-9	199	FR
40	Jonathan Pollard	LB	6-1	243	SR
41	Kevin Davidson	LB	6-1	237	SR
42	Andy Darkins	LB	6-2	227	FR
43	Eric Anderson	SLB	6-1	205	FR
44	Trent Bray	LB	6-1	234	JR
45	Derrick Doggett	WLB	6-3	197	FR
46	Alan Darlin	LB	6-1	238	FR
47	Star Paddock	LS	5-10	187	JR
48	Eddie Stamm	LB	6-1	215	FR
49	Jeff Van Orsow	DE	6-2	258	FR
50	Seth Lacey	LB	6-2	237	SR
51	Adam Speer	C	6-2	290	FR
52	John Strowbridge	P	6-1	230	FR
53	Evan Smith	LB	6-0	195	FR
54	Darrick Bruns	LS	6-5	271	JR
55	Caleb Tommasini	CB	5-11	186	FR
56	Corey O'Neill	PK	5-9	169	FR
57	Kelly Phelps	LB	6-2	226	SO
58	Brent Bridges	OG	6-3	291	SR
60	J.C. Ronnfeldt	OG	6-4	347	SO
61	Adam Koets	OT	6-6	293	SO
62	Jeremy Perry	OG	6-2	296	FR
65	Doug Nienhuis	OT	6-6	321	SR
66	Andy Levitre	OL	6-2	326	FR
67	Roy Schuening	OG	6-3	302	FR
69	Josh Linehan	OT	6-4	284	SO
71	Winfield Usher	OG	6-2	342	FR
73	Matt Brock	C	6-2	298	SR
75	Kyle DeVan	OL	6-2	292	FR
76	Tavita Thompson	OL	6-6	290	FR
77	Pernell Booth	DT	6-1	298	FR
78	Chris Miller	OT	6-5	299	JR
79	Patrick Wu	OT	6-3	302	FR
80	Zach Tarver	WR	6-5	214	FR
81	Kevin Swanigan	WR	6-2	201	JR
82	Brandon Powers	WR	6-1	203	FR
83	Dan Haines	TE	6-4	242	JR
84	Jim Hanchett	TE	6-6	248	JR
85	Jeremy Weldon	TE	6-2	267	JR
86	Gabe Button	TE	6-4	232	SR
87	Zach Hagemeister	TE	6-4	264	FR
88	Pat Loney	TE	6-6	251	SR
89	Joe Newton	TE	6-7	244	SO
90	Bill Swancutt	DE	6-4	259	SR
91	Frank Naymon	DE	6-4	275	FR
92	Alvin Smith	DT	6-2	313	JR
93	Derek Hall	DT	6-3	268	JR
94	Slade Norris	LB/SS	6-2	214	FR
95	Joe Rudolph	DE	6-5	234	FR
96	Brandon Scales	DE	6-5	225	SO
97	Ben Siegert	DT	6-4	271	SO
98	Curtis Coker	DT	6-1	334	FR
99	Sir Henry Anderson	DT	6-3	294	JR

ANALYSIS

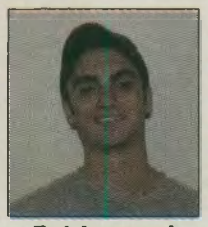
BEAVER RUSHING	BEAVER PASSING	SPECIAL TEAMS	INTANGIBLES
Notre Dame's rush defense is ranked No. 9 in the nation, averaging just 94.4 yards allowed per game. The Irish have held opponents under 100 yards eight times this season, but only won four of those games.	The Irish secondary has been one of the worst in the country, allowing five touchdowns in each of Notre Dame's last two games in the regular season. The team's average of 274.3 yards allowed through the air per game is the fourth-worst in the nation.	Fitzpatrick is 11-for-15 in field goals this year, and has been better than average on his punts — averaging 42.4 yards per kick. The Irish kick return team has been woeful, allowing two touchdowns and 20.5 yards average per return.	Notre Dame hasn't won a bowl game since 1994, and lost its last two games during the regular season. They'd love to break both those streaks at the Insight Bowl, and help Baer go out a winner — no doubt with the team playing in honor of Williingham.
Oregon State has gone from one of the best rushing teams in the nation with Stephen Jackson in 2003, to the second-worst in the nation in 2004 at just 75.3 yards per game. Its passing game more than makes up for the lack of a rushing game.	Anderson is not a stellar quarterback, but neither was Pittsburgh's Tyler Palko, who threw for 334 yards and five touchdowns against the Irish. Anderson is the leader of the nation's eighth-best passing attack, averaging 304.4 yards per game.	Serna is 16-of-17 for field goals this year, but has missed three extra points — with all three coming in a game that cost the team an upset victory against LSU early in the season. The Beavers have allowed one punt return for a touchdown.	The Beavers are anxious to show their 6-5 record is misleading, and hope to take advantage of the Irish while they're down. With the game in Arizona, Oregon State might have a slight home-field advantage, but then again there are Irish fans everywhere.
The Beavers will probably lose this battle badly. However, the Irish have still lost plenty of games this year in which they stopped their opponents' running games, so Oregon State might not be too worried if they can't run against the Notre Dame defense.	Oregon State's strength on offense is through the air, something that doesn't bode well for the Irish. Anytime during the regular season that the Irish faced a veteran quarterback, the defense suffered as a result. Anderson is an accomplished senior who doesn't make many mistakes.	Neither team is overly impressive when it comes to special teams. Both do some things well and some things poorly. The kicking games for each team are especially shaky, as Serna has been suspect on extra points and Fitzpatrick has missed several field goals.	The Irish really want to win this game, but this looks like a bit of a mismatch with one of the best passing offense in the country against an Irish secondary that is one of the worst. The distractions surrounding Notre Dame's coaching changes might prove a distraction for the Irish, as well.

NOTRE DAME — OREGON STATE

Heather Van Hoegarden
Sports Editor

Oregon State's passing attack will be too much for Notre Dame as all team's attacks have been this season. The Beavers will stop the Irish offense enough to get the win through the air. The Irish are optimistic about next season, but it doesn't start here.

FINAL SCORE: Oregon State 27, Notre Dame 20



Pat Leonard
Associate Sports Editor

Notre Dame has optimism for next season and something to prove. But the Oregon State passing offense has been too complicated and successful this season to let me pick the Irish — who struggle against the pass — in this one.

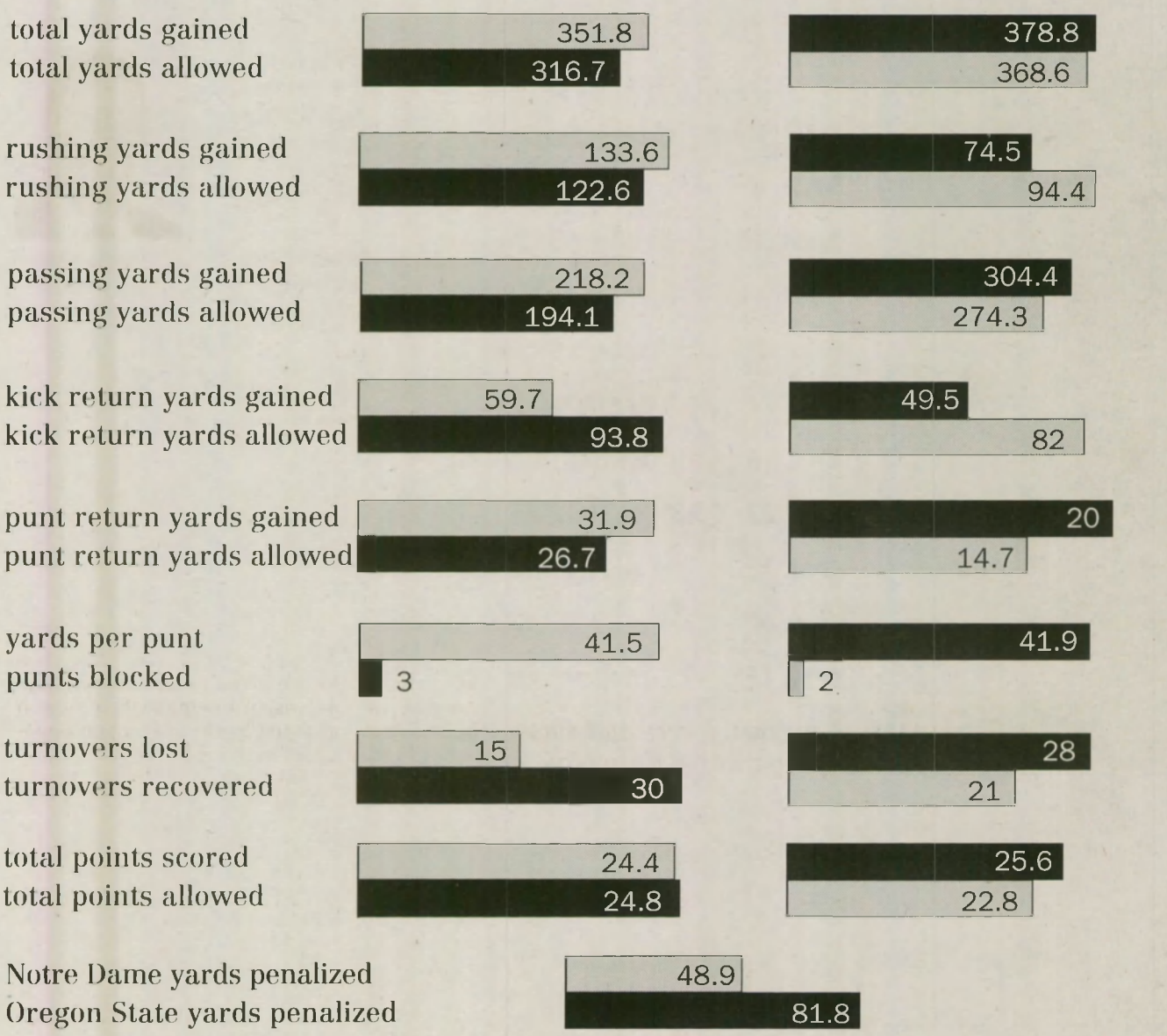
FINAL SCORE: Oregon State 31, Notre Dame 24

Justin Schuver
Associate Sports Editor

The Irish would really really love to win this game for Willingham. But, they probably really really wanted to beat USC, Pittsburgh, Purdue, Boston College and BYU, as well. The Notre Dame secondary simply doesn't have enough to stop Anderson and the Beavers' passing attack.

FINAL SCORE: Oregon State 35, Notre Dame 14

Sizing up the Irish and Beavers



KEY MATCHUP

NOTRE DAME PASSING DEFENSE

Notre Dame's passing defense has been woeful this season, especially against teams with a veteran quarterback.

The Irish have been especially suspect against the pass in their last two games against Pittsburgh and USC in which Notre Dame defensive backs allowed five touchdowns in each contest.

Quentin Burrell, above, and the rest of the Irish defensive backs are going to have to stop the Beavers' passing game if the Irish have any hope of winning their first bowl game since 1994.

OREGON STATE PASSING GAME

The Beavers pass for 304.4 yards per game, while the Irish allow 274.3 yards per game. That's not good odds if you're a Notre Dame fan.

Derek Anderson, above, has been one of the best passers in the country, throwing for 3,257 yards and 25 touchdowns. The Beavers have been a pass-first team all season, and Anderson has fit perfectly into head coach Mike Riley's system.

Eight different Beavers have caught a touchdown pass this season, and Anderson will try to spread the Irish secondary early and look for matchups to take advantage of.

Mattison to join Meyer's UF staff after bowl

Current Irish defensive line coach will be Gators' co-defensive coordinator

By MATT LOZAR
Sports Writer

Irish defensive line coach Greg Mattison simply couldn't take another coaching change.

Mattison will become co-defensive coordinator and the defensive line coach at the on new coach Urban Meyer's staff at the University of Florida after coaching Notre Dame in the Insight Bowl Dec. 28.

"I'm really excited about it. I'm excited about [Meyer]," Mattison said Friday. "We've always really respected each other. I think the world of him and the job he's done and I'm excited about being there."

Mattison was the defensive coordinator for all five years of former Irish coach Bob Davie's tenure. When Tyrone Willingham came to South Bend in 2002, Mattison was the lone holdover from Davie's staff and has been the defensive line coach for the past three seasons.

"When you're a guy that's kept, it's hard to go pick up the pieces," Mattison said. "Recruiting is hard enough, but when you have to go in after something like this happened, the first thing you have to get the young man's confidence and trust. Then you have to recruit him. I said I don't know if I want to go through that whole thing again."

Mattison is known as one of Notre Dame's top recruiters over the past eight years. The challenge of recruiting at Notre Dame is the lack of a local talent base. While the allure of playing for the Irish is an advantage, the countrywide search is a hindrance.

At Florida, that won't be the case.

"For the past eight years, I've been on a plane it seems like every other day flying all over the country," Mattison said. [Meyer] said, 'How are you going to like getting in your car, driving to see a kid at night and then driving home?' Then I said, 'Well I haven't done that in along time, that will be kind of fun.'"

"I think the world of [Meyer] and the job he's done and I'm excited about being there."

Greg Mattison
Irish defensive line coach

Mattison was in consideration for the Western Michigan head-coaching job, but pulled his name from contention when he couldn't commit five years to running the show there.

"I wasn't going to take a job and have everybody commit to you and you commit to them and something comes up like a Florida or something like that and have to tell those guys I'm going to take this job," Mattison said. "I don't believe in that."

After coaching at the University of Michigan for five years, the last two as defensive coordinator, Mattison came to South Bend and has seen a number of defensive linemen make it to the National Football League, including Lance Legree, Anthony Weaver, Derrick Campbell and Cedric Hilliard. Current senior defensive end Justin Tuck is projected as a high draft pick when he decides to go to the NFL.

Great players, seeing his daughter graduate in 2003 and his love for the University Mattison leaves with nothing but good things to say about Notre Dame.

"Notre Dame is a special place, it's as good of a place as there is. I'm still excited about the day I left Michigan to come here. That's one of the best decisions I ever made just because I had the opportunity to spend eight years at this great institution," Mattison said. "They are going to be great here. The coach that comes in here, I really think has some great talent. The defense should be back the way it was, and the offense has everybody back.

"Notre Dame will get past this bump. I don't think there's a question about that."

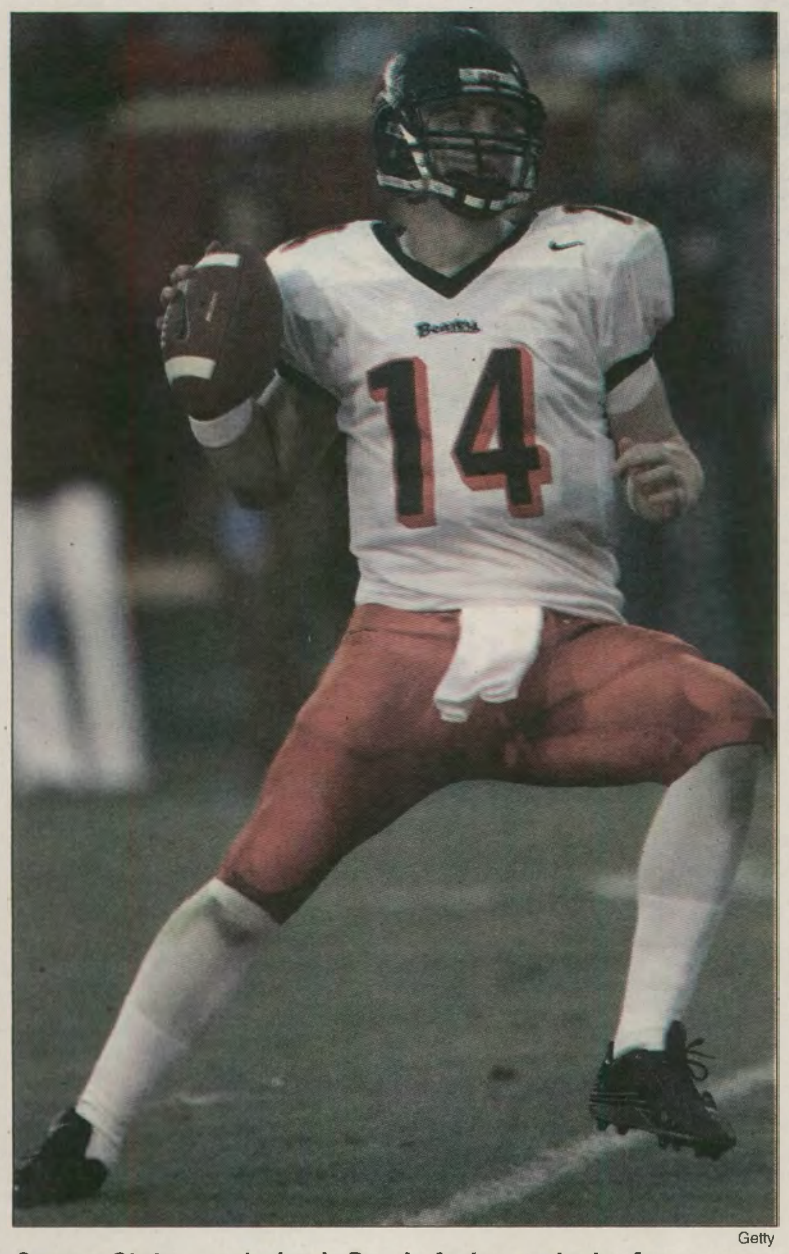
Contact Matt Lozar at mlozar@nd.edu

CLAIRE KELLEY/The Observer

Irish defensive line coach Greg Mattison, back, will leave Notre Dame after the Insight Bowl to become co-defensive coordinator for Florida coach Urban Meyer's staff.

Oregon State happy to be in any bowl game

No. 4 California's BCS snub drops Beavers from Sun Bowl to Insight Bowl



Getty

Oregon State quarterback Derek Anderson looks for an open receiver during the Beavers' game against USC.

By PAT LEONARD
Associate Sports Editor

No. 4 California was poised to take a BCS bid to the Rose Bowl. Then, it happened.

The Golden Bears got snubbed in favor of No. 6 Texas. Their drop in the bowl picture rippled throughout the Pac-10 conference, and the stage was set.

Notre Dame (6-5) would play Oregon State (6-5), not UCLA, in the Insight Bowl Dec. 28 in Phoenix.

"There's going to be a lot said about how this all transpired," fourth-year Oregon State head coach Mike Riley said. "I really have no opinion on it whatsover. I said right after the Oregon game that I'm very excited to be going to a bowl game, they'll tell us where to go and we'll be very pleased with it."

Had California gone to the Rose Bowl, Oregon State would have met Purdue in the Sun Bowl. But Riley said his team is pleased with even receiving a bowl bid.

"It's exciting for our team," he said. "I think it's great for the Beavers to play five of the last six years in bowl games. It's a great opportunity to practice our young players."

Oregon State routed Notre Dame 41-9 in the last postseason meeting between the two teams at the 2001 Fiesta Bowl.

This time, the Beavers again bring a high-octane passing attack characteristic of Pac-10 teams against a Notre Dame secondary that has allowed 10 passing touchdowns in its last two games.

Quarterback Derek Anderson leads the Beaver offense that averages 304 yards passing and 74 yards rushing per game. Anderson kept Oregon State close against No. 1 USC in a 28-20 loss, the same team that beat Notre Dame 41-10.

"[Oregon State] throws the ball all over the place," Irish interim head coach Kent Baer said. "They have got every route imaginable, everything you can imagine in the passing game, [and they throw] for 300 yards a game."

"I think Notre Dame and the Insight Bowl are attractive to our team. Just like all of us coaches, I think the players are excited just to learn where and who they wanted us to play."

Mike Riley
Oregon State coach

Notre Dame's defense gives up 274 yards passing and 94 yards rushing per game.

Anderson (6-foot-6, 240-pounds) has thrown for 10,891 yards and 75 touchdowns in four seasons with the Insight Bowl remaining, both first all-time for an Oregon State quarterback. He also has the second most career passing yards of an active Division-I quarterback behind only Hawaii's Timmy Chang (16,667 yards).

Anderson helped Oregon State rebound from a 1-4 start. The Beavers played four ranked teams in their first five games, losing to Boise State, Arizona State, California and Louisiana State, a 22-21 season-opening loss in which kicker Alexis Serna missed three extra points.

Riley's team bounced back to win on the road against Washington, Arizona and Stanford, and a season-ending 50-21 victory over in-state rival Oregon clinched the Beaver bowl berth.

Oregon State defensive end Bill Swancutt (6-foot-4, 259-pounds) anchors the Beavers line and has the second-highest sack total (11.5) and third-most tackles for a loss (18.5) in the conference. Swancutt was announced as the 2004 Morris Trophy winner recently, an award given to an offensive and defensive lineman each season as voted by the players on opponents' starting lines.

Anderson and Swancutt are both seniors and looking to close their careers out with a win Dec. 28.

"I think the Sun Bowl was attractive. I think Notre Dame and the Insight Bowl are attractive to our team," Riley said. "Just like all of us coaches, I think the players were excited just to learn where and who they wanted us to play."

Contact Pat Leonard at pleonard@nd.edu

Baer decides not to pursue Utah State job

By MATT LOZAR
Sports Writer

The way Irish interim head coach Kent Baer explained the Utah State situation showed how difficult a decision it was.

Baer's parents live five minutes from the campus. His son, granddaughter and four sisters live there as well. He played college football for the Aggies and coached there for nine years.

But for Baer to take a head coach position, it had to be about more than personal connections.

"After looking at the situation, my emotional heart and my personal heart was into it because that's where I'm from," Baer said. "But my professional heart just didn't seem like the right thing for me to do right now. I'd love to be a head coach someday. I want to make sure it's the right situation. I don't want to be a head coach just to be a head coach. So, again, it was just a gut feeling."

Baer wasn't satisfied when the school couldn't commit to future plans concerning upgrades to the locker room, meeting rooms and weight room.

When the school asked Baer if we would accept the job if it was offered, he said no.

Baer met with Utah State in Arizona the second time after meeting them in Los Angeles on the first go-around.

Utah State announced Brent Guy as its new head coach Friday.

Beavers a streaking team

After a 1-4 start, the Beavers have won five of their last six games to become bowl-eligible after defeating Oregon 50-21 on Nov. 20 in the annual 'Civil War" game between the two teams.

The hot finish to the season reminds Baer of the 1996 Stanford team that won its final four regular season games before defeating Michigan State 38-0 in the Sun Bowl.

"[They've] won four out of the last five or five out of the last six. So, we might be playing one of the hottest teams in the country. We're playing a team that's pretty hungry," Baer said. "They're really a talented football team and we're going to have our hands full.

It's going to be a challenge. Our guys are excited to play them."

The impressive statistic about Oregon State's five losses — LSU, Boise State, Arizona State, California and USC — is those all came against teams currently ranked in the Associated Press top 25 and all five are playing in bowl games.

Parish continues to practice at cornerback

After making his starting debut at cornerback against Southern California Nov. 27, Freddie Parish will continue to see time at the cornerback position in bowl practice as well as get repetitions at his customary safety position.

"Freddie did an excellent job for us that day. It's really just a tough situation to get him in, get him all the looks," Baer said. "But I thought for the most part, he did a great job. I know they gave us some looks, especially in the passing game that he hadn't seen, that we hadn't practiced. I thought for the most part he did well."

Baer wouldn't say whether Parish would get his second start of the season at corner in the bowl game.

Team hopes to get players healthy for bowl

Baer didn't have a lengthy injury update list on Friday. He said defensive end Justin Tuck should be okay and that Maurice Stovall, who has been battling an ankle injury this season, should be fine once the Irish get to Phoenix.

Coming out of the USC game, the Irish had some players beat up. Baer said he will hold some back in practice so they're ready for Oregon State.

Practice schedule

Baer said the Irish will practice today, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday before the players go home for a few days.

The team will reconvene in Phoenix on Dec. 22.

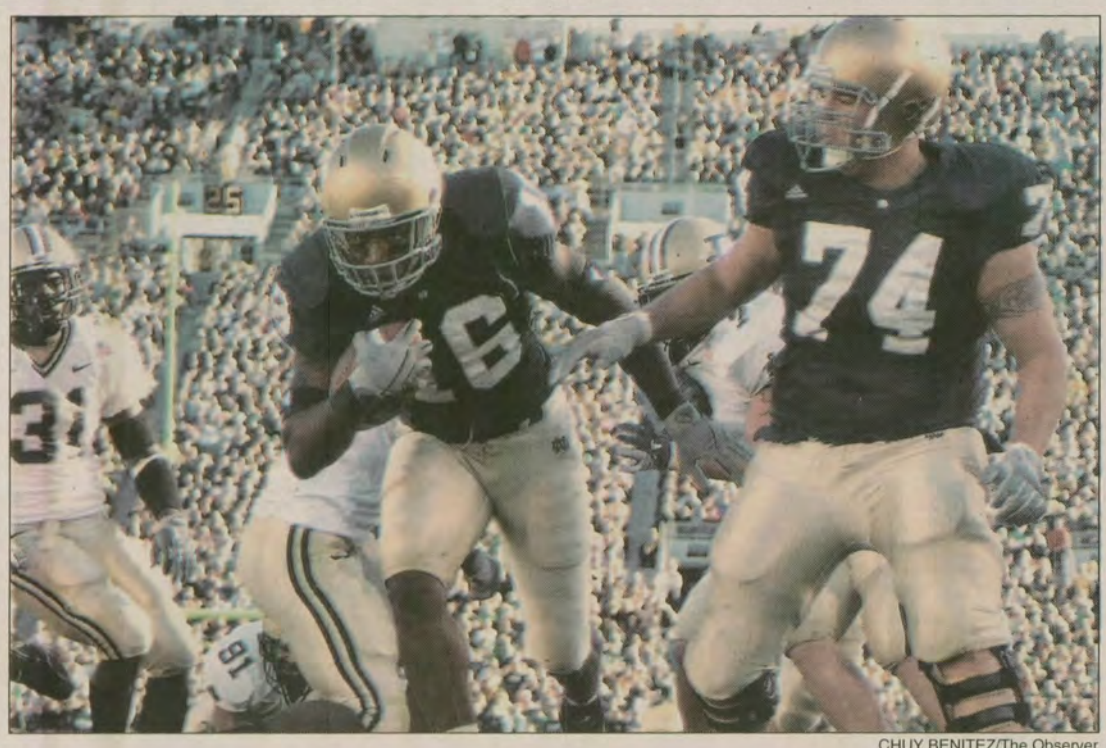
Contact Matt Lozar at mlozar@nd.edu

AP

Notre Dame interim coach Kent Baer turned down the opportunity to be the head coach at Utah State.

CHUY BENITEZ/The Observer

CHUY BENITEZ/The Observer



CHUY BENITEZ/The Observer

THE BEST OF 2004

Notre Dame's roller-coaster season had plenty of highs — upsetting No. 7 Michigan, defeating No. 11 Tennessee in a packed Neyland Stadium — but also plenty of lows — losing to Brigham Young in the first game of the season, dropping consecutive home games to Boston College and Pittsburgh. The team's up-and-down performance also featured the emergence of several Irish stars — running back Darius Walker and wide receiver Matt Shelton, among others. The Irish hope to finish the season on a good note with a victory in the Insight Bowl Dec. 28.

CLAIRE KELLEY/The Observer

CHUY BENITEZ/The Observer

CHUY BENITEZ/The Observer

Clockwise from top left, Irish wide receiver Matt Shelton catches one of his two touchdowns against Michigan. Irish running back Ryan Grant breaks a tackle against Navy. Irish running back Darius Walker breaks free for a long gain against Stanford. Irish defensive end Kyle Budinscak tackles Tennessee running back Gerald Riggs, Jr. Irish tight end Billy Palmer celebrates his only touchdown of the season against USC. Irish fullback Rashon Powers-Neal scores a touchdown against Purdue.

Former Irish players commend decision to hire Weis

By ERIC RETTER
Sports Writer

The NFL branch of the Notre Dame Alumni Association has no illusions as to why Charlie Weis came to the Irish.

"He's here to win football games," said Mark Bavaro, a former Irish tight end who, along with Weis, won the Super Bowl as part of the 1990 New York Giants.

Weis comes to South Bend with an impressive history of being part of teams that do just that, being the proud owner of three world championship rings and leading the offensive attack for a Patriots team poised to make a run for a fourth.

Weis' hiring ends a two-week long firestorm that began when Tyrone Willingham was dismissed on Nov. 30.

Many are glad the situation resolved itself in Weis.

"I'm pumped about [the hire]," said Marc Edwards, former Irish star and Jaguars fullback. "The circus is over. We got a big-time coach, and we didn't have to settle. He's a name with Notre Dame ties."

Moving Weis from coaching on Sundays to Saturdays is expected to immediately impact the Irish on the recruiting trail.

"First of all, kids should come to Notre Dame because of the school, but, if you bring in a guy with three Super Bowl rings and who's a proven winner, then high school kids are going to want to play for him," Bavaro said.

"The circus is over. We got a big-time coach, and we didn't have to settle. He's a name with Notre Dame ties."

Marc Edwards
Jaguars fullback

Not only will Weis potentially help bring top high school student-athletes to the Irish, but he will bring with him the ability to develop the talent that is already here.

"He gives players a program to buy into," Bavaro said.

Weis will juggle his Notre Dame and New England coaching responsibilities for the remainder of the NFL season. Patriots head coach Bill Belichick had nothing but good things to say about Weis and gave his offensive coordinator his blessing to come to the Irish — after the Patriots season comes to a close.

"He's been here five years and has a lot to do with our success," Belichick told the Associated Press. "We all at the Patriots wish him well. But at the same time, we have a lot of football left. We have a job to do."

After years of success as an assistant coach, next year's Irish squad will be the first college or professional team Weis has managed. However, those who have worked with him don't expect the doubts about his lack of head coaching experience to manifest themselves any time soon.

"There's definitely question marks," Bavaro said. "No one's sure [what will happen], but judging by his past record, he's more than capable."

Most seem convinced any head coaching deficiency Weis may have will be more than eclipsed by the ability he brings to the table.

"He has a brilliant football mind," past Notre Dame tight end and 10-year NFL veteran Derek Brown said. "That alone is part of it. He understands the big picture."

That mind will be charged with uniting a team and a community that has seen its share of controversy since Willingham departed.

"The only way you do that is by winning games," Edwards said. "You have to win football games, and, if you do that, then everyone will rally behind you."

"Winning cures everything," Brown agreed.

Weis' desire to make this his last coaching stop is shared by Edwards who wants to see Weis roaming the Irish sidelines for a many years.

"He signed a long-term contract," Edwards said. "Hopefully he'll be the face of Notre Dame football for a long time to come."

Contact Eric Retter at eretter@nd.edu

Home

continued from page 4

"Obviously one of the two greatest influences of my life in the coaching profession is Bill Parcells," Weis said. "I mean, he took me, gave me an opportunity when I was an absolute nobody, hired me and groomed me, and started me on special teams and then I moved to offense."

Weis coached the Giants' running backs for two years before moving to New England, where he coached running backs, tight ends and wide receivers for the Patriots from 1993-96. Weis then went to the New York Jets, where he made his debut at offensive coordinator in 1998. In 2000, he returned to New England as Bill Belichick's offensive coordinator, picking up two more Super Bowl titles.

"The foresight and insight that [Belichick] had is one of the things that I pride myself on — trying to take the best attributes of each person I've been around and he's ahead of most people," Weis said.

Working under two of the era's most celebrated head coaches prepared him to take over one of the most visible jobs in the nation.

"I look at those guys, those gentlemen who I have been able to be groomed under and be polished under and learned how to deal with the game of football and teaching of football and dealing with all of the different elements and the distractions, and get focused on what's really important," Weis said.

Family is important to Weis and his wife, Maura, who have two children, Charlie and Hannah. In 2003, Weis and Maura started the Hannah & Friends Foundation for children and young adults affected by autism and global delays. Weis' daughter Hannah is affected by these developmental disorders.

Maura and Charlie attended Weis' press conference where he announced his acceptance of the Notre Dame job.

"This is not a stepping stone," Weis said. "This is an end-all for our family. We come to Notre Dame, it's with the intent of retiring here ... I'm proud to be here. I'm thankful to be here."

Contact Kate Gales at kgales@nd.edu

Recruiting

continued from page 4

good if we can get him here in the next couple of days."

One of the potential drawbacks to Weis is his lack of collegiate experience. His only time spent at the college level was as a graduate assistant and assistant recruiting coordinator at South Carolina from 1985-88.

"He has the NFL experience, yes, but now he's with a college team," Bruton said. "I figure that it will be different [for Weis]."

On the other hand, Smith does not see any problems with Weis' coaching experience.

"I don't think [Weis' lack of college experience] is a negative at all," he said. "Just look at what he's done as a professional coach. He's won a couple of Super Bowls."

So far the only verbal recruit to totally retract his commitment from Notre Dame is Dayton, Ohio defensive back Brandon Harrison. Lawrence Wilson, a defensive end from Akron, Ohio, has taken away his verbal commitment but still has the Irish on his list along with Ohio State, Pittsburgh and Michigan.

Harrison is considering Michigan and Iowa.

Contact Mike Gilloon at mgilloon@nd.edu

White

continued from page 1

Weis at 2 p.m. on Friday. Then at 3 p.m., University Provost Nathan Hatch, Executive Vice President John Affleck-Graves and Faculty Board on Athletics chair Fernand Dutile, chair of the faculty board on athletics. A decision was then made and at 6 p.m. Friday evening, White and University President-elect Father John Jenkins offered Weis the position.

Contact Matt Lozar at mlozar@nd.edu

Malloy

continued from page 1

The reason it's been so tough for Notre Dame during all of the media criticism, is the University's high profile.

"People look at it and people attend to it. When we go to follow coaches, the press follows us around and that's not true at every school. We welcome that scrutiny," Jenkins said. "We think we have it because we have high ideals for our program. We are going to keep them, and we are going to meet them. We'll be able to put us behind us, and we look forward to the future."

Contact Matt Lozar at mlozar@nd.edu

Weis knows nasty is needed

AP

Charlie Weis coaches the New England Patriots Sunday.

It stuck out like the diamond-filled ring that weighs down his right hand.

In the middle of his lengthy opening statement, new Notre Dame football coach Charlie Weis described what his team would be.

Hard working — Weis knows first-hand championship football teams aren't made by going through the motions.

Matt Lozar
Sports Writer

Intelligent — at Notre Dame, Weis already has an advantage.

Nasty — wait a second.

"And I hate to include the nasty, but that is part of being a winning football team," Weis explained.

After three years of politically correct Tyrone Willingham always having the right answer to every question, Weis opened some eyes at his first press conference.

One common theory in replacing a leader is to go for the opposite of the person being replaced.

Weis isn't the exact opposite of Willingham. Both understand the first and foremost responsibility of the coach at Notre Dame is to win and win often. That's why a new coach was announced Monday.

But Willingham never talked about his team being nasty. Having a swagger, yes. Being nasty, no.

There is a difference.

Weis comes from the Bill Parcells and Bill Belichick coaching pedigree. Knowing anything about those two top-flight coaches reveals they are no-nonsense kind of people who don't make excuses for anything.

Parcells throws his rookies into the fire and chastises them when they ask for a play off. Just ask Julius Jones how well that's worked.

Belichick won't acknowledge injuries as an excuse in New England this year. The Patriots have been forced him into using wide receiver Troy Brown as a defensive back. By the way, the Patriots are 12-1.

Weis refused to make excuses Monday about the academic standards for recruiting, the challenging schedule and juggling act he'll have to perform holding two jobs for what many hope is until Feb. 6 in the winning locker room at Super Bowl XXXIX.

The players really didn't know what to think upon hearing Weis' nasty comment during the press conference.

They remember an offensive coordinator from the Super Bowl champions as something more than just a run-of-the-mill guest speaker during a winter practice. He criticized them and after that initial shock, the players realized this guy knows what he is talking about.

Hearing the nasty comment Monday morning provided another eye-opener for the players.

But they let it sink in again.

And they liked it.

Just ask Justin Tuck and Brady Quinn.

After meeting with Weis Monday afternoon for the second time in as many days, the two leaders left the Joyce Center with a bounce in their step and smiles on their faces.

It didn't matter that it was finals week.

It didn't matter that it was a winter wonderland in South Bend.

It didn't matter that Tuck has all the temptation in the world to declare a year early for the NFL draft.

They wanted to strap on the pads right there.

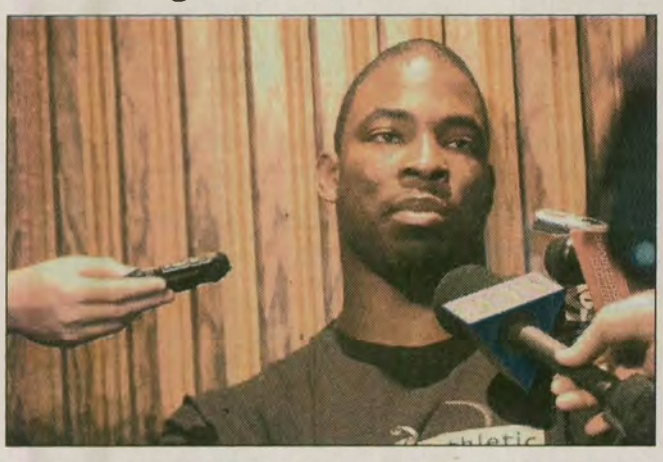
Why?

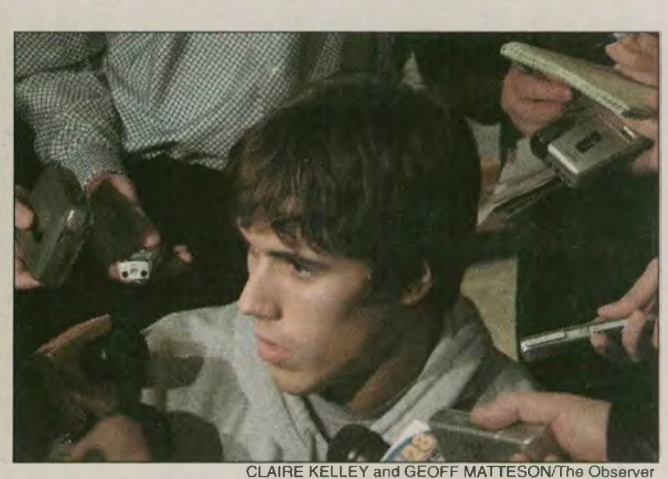
They know that nasty wins.

Just look at Weis' right hand.

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

Players respond positively to Weis hire





CLAIRE KELLEY and GEOFF MATTESON/The Observer

From left, defensive end Justin Tuck, tight end Anthony Fasano and quarterback Brady Quinn answered questions regarding their new coach, Charlie Weis. The three along with linebacker Brandon Hoyte, defensive end Victor Abiamiri and offensive tackle Ryan Harris are part of the student athlete transition team.

By JOE HETTLER
Sports Writer

Brady Quinn looked like a kid on Christmas morning Monday.

The Irish signal-caller was all smiles a few moments after Notre Dame named New England Patriots offensive coordinator Charlie Weis its 28th football head coach at a morning press conference.

"Everybody is real excited," Quinn said. "We didn't get to meet as a team and talk about it, but you can tell there's a lot of excitement and happiness that, one, the whole search is over — we know where we are — and secondly [about] the person we have."

After personally meeting with Weis around 9 p.m. Sunday evening, it didn't take Quinn long to form an opinion of his new coach.

"Maybe five minutes," Quinn said, still grinning, "because he got right down to it. He started talking about himself and what he's all about and right then he had my attention. I'm just happy he's here."

Although the entire team didn't speak with Weis before he was hired, many players had already met the 1978 Notre Dame graduate. Weis spoke to the Irish during winter workouts last year, and Tuck remembers the speech as anything but typical.

"Honestly, he was the first guest speaker that wasn't hip hip hooray Notre Dame," Irish defensive end Justin Tuck said. "He was more of a critical guest speaker. That was kind of surprising. He was the first speaker to come in and really get on us about things.

"We were like 'You're the guest speaker, you're supposed to come and say how great Notre Dame is and blah blah blah.' It was a different twist. That was our first impression of him."

Tuck said Weis may even have insulted some of the players during his speech.

"I think some took a little offense to it," Tuck said. "But then they sat down thought about it and he was right."

Irish tight end Anthony Fasano believes Weis will help Notre Dame have a different attitude on and off the field.

"I think [an attitude change was needed]. Going 6-5, you have to change something," Fasano said. "I think that's a big part of football, and I think he's going to bring it to our team."

Tuck said he liked what Weis said in the press conference, specifically when the new coach referred to Notre Dame as being "a nasty" team under his leadership.

"When he said that, I actually started laughing because I've never heard someone at a press conference say 'nasty,'" Tuck said. "But that's a good thing because football is a nasty game, and you want that attitude coming from the top person and filtering down to the team."

Perhaps the biggest benefactor of the Weis hiring is the Irish offense, specifically Quinn. Weis has developed New England's former sixth-round pick, Tom Brady, into a two-time Super Bowl MVP, while leading the Patriots to wins in two of the last three Super Bowls.

"I'm pumped up," Quinn said. "Honestly, going to the press conference, hearing him talk and watching the [New England] game [Sunday], it only brings excitement to me, and I just can't wait to get out there and get my head in the playbook."

As for Tuck, Notre Dame's all-time sack leader has one year remaining of eligibility remaining, and he said he's still waiting to decide whether to go into the NFL or stay in South Bend.

"That's going through my head right now," Tuck said. "From the little I know about [Weis] and listening to him at the press conference, he seems like ... somebody you can really like as a head coach."

Quinn said one of the most important criterions that Weis will bring Notre Dame's football program is confidence. With so many accolades to his name, no one doubts Weis' ability to help a team find success.

"It impresses me. It gives me a sense of confidence in him because he knows what it takes to get there," Quinn said. "He's coaching guys, he's had success and he's winning Super Bowl[s]. It's only going to help us, to give us more confidence and inevitably buy into his program and his system."

Contact Joe Hettler at jhettler@nd.edu

Recruits excited about Weis tenure

By MIKE GILLOON
Sports Writer

As new Notre Dame coach Charlie Weis walked through the Joyce Center doors Sunday night a large Super Bowl ring sparkled on his right ring finger. Apparently it caught the eye of Irish recruits.

Marshall, Mich. quarterback Evan Sharpley was enthusiastic at the idea of playing under a man who developed New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady from a sixth-round draft pick to Super Bowl MVP.

"He has a great track record," Sharpley said. "Pretty much everywhere he's gone he's done pretty well. It's fun to watch him on Sundays as the Patriots have an exciting offense and they use their players well."

The combination of being on the coaching staff of three Super Bowl winning teams along with running one of the best offenses in the NFL is another selling point.

"He's a pretty good head coach," Hartford, Conn. fullback Asaph Schwapp said. "He really has the experience. He's done a heck of a job in the NFL. It's pretty exciting to know that he's won a couple Super Bowls."

Highland Park, Ill. linebacker Scott Smith agreed with his future teammates.

"I'm definitely excited that they found a guy like coach Weis to come in," he said. "I don't know much about him but I'm looking forward to getting a chance to talk with him."

David Bruton, a safety from Miamisburg, Ohio, wasn't as thrilled as Sharpley but still felt Notre Dame made a good choice.

"It's a step in the right direction," Bruton said. "I still don't know much about him or how he coaches or his personality or anything like that."

When contacted none of the recruits said Weis had talked to them. However, both Sharpley and Smith indicated that they were expecting a call from Weis sometime Monday night.

"I'm looking forward to that call," Sharpley said.

Sharpley, who carries a 3.97 GPA, phoned a number of players who have already given their verbal commitments to the Irish and other potential recruits after Weis was hired.

"I called some guys [Sunday] to see what their opinions were," he said. "A lot of guys were excited. I mean, who wouldn't be?"

One player Sharpley specifically mentioned was Kansas City, Mo. wide receiver D.J. Hord. He has an official visit scheduled with Notre Dame but Nebraska, Oklahoma and LSU are among the schools competing with the Irish for Hord.

"I'm talking to him a lot right now," Sharpley said. "It will be

Former ND grad returns home

By KATE GALES
News Writer

It was a 27-year journey from student section to sidelines for Charlie Weis.

Starting in New Jersey, stopping off in South Carolina and winding through New England, Weis has come home to end his career as Notre Dame football's new head coach.

"This is obviously a high-profile, big-time job," Weis said. "But it's one that I, a long, long time ago thought — 'wouldn't that be something if you could ever be the head coach at University of Notre Dame.'"

Weis picked up three Super Bowl rings on his way home to the Dome and is the first Notre Dame alumnus to coach the Irish since Hugh Devore served as interim coach in 1963.

Dr. Jim Benenati, Weis' roommate from his days as a resident of Flanner 2B, recalled Weis as a "warm and caring" person. Benenati recalled sitting and cheering at football games with Weis. However, at the time Benenati never imagined his roommate standing where Dan Devine then patrolled.

"I never put it past him, [but] I would be lying if I thought back when we were in school that he'd ever be the Notre Dame football coach," Benenati said. "I don't think that ever even crossed my mind, but I never put anything past him in terms of ending up back at the school in some capacity."

Charlie Weis Profile

- College: Notre Dame
- College Coaching Experience:
  South Carolina (1985-88)
  Assistant Coach
- Pro Coaching Experience:
  New York Giants (1990-92)
  Assistant Coach
  New England Patriots (1993-96)
  TE/RB/WR Coach
  New York Jets (1997-99)
  Offensive Coordinator/
  WR Coach
  New England Patriots (2000-04)
  Offensive Coordinator

MIKE HARKINS/Observer Graphic

The New Jersey native was born in Trenton on March 30, 1956. He graduated from Middlesex High School in 1974 and the University of Notre Dame in 1978 with a bachelor's degree in speech and drama, with an emphasis in communications. While coaching at the University of South Carolina in 1989, Weis earned his master's degree in education.

In 1979, Weis began his career as a coach at Boonton (N.J.) High School as an assistant coach. For the next five years, he was an assistant coach at Morristown (N.J.) High School until moving to South Carolina to serve as a graduate assistant, volunteer coach and assistant recruiting coordinator from 1985-88. In 1989, Weis returned to New Jersey to spend one year as head coach at Franklin Township (N.J.) High School.

In 1990, Weis earned his first Super Bowl ring during his first season with the New York giants as a defensive assistant. Today, he credits Bill Parcells as one of the greatest influences on his career.