

IRISH INSIDER

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THE FIRST STEP



THE IRISH HEAD OVERSEAS TO BEGIN THE 2012
SEASON AGAINST NAVY IN DUBLIN

THE OBSERVER

Photo Illustration by Suzanna Pratt and Brandon Keelean

COMMENTARY

Golson selection not enough



Allan Joseph
Editor-in-Chief

DUBLIN — Don't do it. Just don't. Don't read too much into Irish coach Brian Kelly's selection of sophomore Everett Golson as the starting quarterback for tomorrow's opener.

I'm all for getting excited about it, but the truth is stark: Golson is not the solution to all of Notre Dame's woes. He will not lead the Irish to a national championship, or even 10 regular-season wins, this year. He will not be a Heisman contender. He will not be the second coming of Joe Montana.

He will, however, make plenty of mistakes.

That's understandable — after all, Golson is a first-time starter. The Blue-Gold Game and practice are a good start, but no one rushes you quite as quickly as an opposing defensive end in front of tens of thousands of fans. Especially early in the season, the young, talented quarterback will show his youth more often than his talents.

But the biggest reason Golson's inexperience will prevent him from being an instant legend is because of the offense he has to work with. Without Michael Floyd to draw safeties away from senior tight end Tyler Eifert, Golson won't have a big safety blanket. Even more worrisome is the depth of the receiving corps as a whole. While there's a lot of talent in players like T.J. Jones, Theo Riddick and Robby Toma, none of them have demonstrated an ability to consistently change games. This means Golson is going to have to account for more of the offense than he would have last year. Some of that will be straightforward, like an increased reliance on option and zone-read plays. Some of it will be more intangible, like drawing defenders away from his receivers by rolling out of the pocket. All of it will be challenging for a young quarterback. He will make mistakes.

Those mistakes might come

at bad times, too. Last year, the Irish had the luxury of relying on bruising veteran running back Jonas Gray when they needed a third-down conversion or in the red zone. While George Atkinson is explosive coming out of the backfield, he doesn't have Gray's size. Again, that very simply translates into more responsibility on Golson. He will make mistakes.

Even if the new starter does exceed every impossibly high expectation, he can't touch this team's biggest liability: its defensive secondary. The success of the 2012 season probably depends more on another starter named last Thursday: freshman KeiVarae Russell, who will start at cornerback following the loss of Lo Wood to injury. Even if Golson turns in 12 impeccable performances this year, this team just won't win 12 games. It will make mistakes.

None of this is to say Golson isn't a significant upgrade for Notre Dame. Every piece of evidence we have — including, yes, that insane high school highlight reel — suggests he'll provide an immediate dose of dynamism to an Irish offense sorely in need of it. I wouldn't be surprised to see him win a game or two on his own after he's settled into the starting role. His ceiling is sky-high, and it's positively scary to think of what he could become by the time his Senior Day rolls around.

But for now, recognize this: Golson is not the end to Notre Dame's problems. He is not the savior of the 2012 season. Throughout the year, he'll probably be up and down, and he'll probably make more than a few highlight-reel plays. But you can count on one thing: He will make mistakes.

Contact Allan Joseph at ajoseph2@nd.edu

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

Follow all the action online at ndsmcobserver.com
The Observer will cover the game live from Dublin.

RECRUITING

International exposure entices Irish recruits

By **CHRIS ALLEN**
Sports Editor

The Irish enter the 2012 season having already assembled a competitive 2013 recruiting class of 19 players, including five ESPNU 150 talents. Though National Signing Day is still nearly a half-year away, Irish coach Brian Kelly and his staff have built a class that ranks No. 8 nationally in ESPN's latest class rankings. Irish recruiting expert Mike Frank said the Irish recruiters outperformed expectations in the summer signing period.

"[Recruiting] has gone even better than I had expected it would," said Frank, who runs the ESPN-affiliated Irish Sports Daily. "Where they're at, with so many top-ranked players already committed, they've done an excellent job in getting some of the best players on campus. It doesn't even stop with 2013, but they've even gotten some 2014 prospects on campus. They've surpassed many expectations."

Highlighting the class is the June 2 commitment of super-prospect outside linebacker Jaylon Smith, who chose the Irish over Ohio State. Smith, ranked No. 14 in the ESPNU 150 and a five-star prospect on some recruiting services, is the highest-ranked Irish recruit at linebacker since current senior and captain Manti Te'o. The Fort Wayne, Ind., product is the centerpiece of a linebacking class that includes ESPN's No. 63 prospect Alex Anzalone. Frank said he loves the versatility Smith will bring to the future Irish defensive corps.

"I absolutely love Jaylon Smith," Frank said. "The reason he's so good is he is versatile across all four linebacking positions in a 3-4. Its about his flexibility. If you bring in somebody like [current Irish commit] Michael Deeb and put him at inside linebacker, Smith can help you outside."

"He has that size that you look for in an elite linebacker, but what makes him so versatile is his quickness. He's as good as they're going to find at that position."

Beyond the trio of Smith, Anzalone and Deeb, Frank said the Irish have taken steps through recruiting to prepare for several graduations on the offensive line. With multiple starters on the offensive line in their final years of eligibility, Kelly's staff has lined up commitments from five offensive linemen in an effort to restock talent. Tackles Colin McGovern and Hunter Bivin are the only members of the group in the ESPNU 150, but Frank said the group represents a

commitment by Kelly to continuing physical football.

"I'm most excited about the offensive line class that Kelly is bringing in," Frank said. "With these players, Brian Kelly can get back to where Notre Dame needs to be consistently in terms of playing physical football and building a winner."

The Irish also welcomed the commitments of several players Frank believe to be under-the-radar gems, among them tight end Danny Mattingly and defensive end Isaac Rochell.

"Danny Mattingly is somebody who most recruiting services have as a three-star

"[Recruiting] has gone even better than I had expected it would."

Mike Frank
Irish recruiting expert

player, but I don't see it that way," Frank said. "To me he is someone who is a four-star if not a high-four star player. Isaac Rochell committed early in June so people forget about him, but at the defensive end position he is also going to be a top-notch player for this coaching staff."

Having already built a stellar class, the Irish now turn to Dublin and the season opener. The Emerald Isle Classic will feature a handful of high school football games in advance of the clash between Notre Dame and Navy. While there are several top players playing in those lead-up games who may

lean Irish after the event, Frank said the real recruiting event would come from recruits who see the program's international exposure.

"What will be evident to recruits who are over there and those who are watching on television is just how strong the fan base is," he said. "There are going to be 40,000 Notre Dame fans over in a foreign country, and there are very few teams that could pull that off. I can only think of a couple that have that kind of fan support."

"So for recruits across the country, Notre Dame has a big interest in showing the kind of international exposure that the program has, and the kinds of events a player participates in at Notre Dame."

Frank said the opportunity to experience a major event in a foreign country would be an attractive opportunity to a recruit despite the grueling travel and unfamiliar surroundings.

"Ultimately, everybody wants these kinds of opportunities, to have the chance to see a world that is completely different than their own," Frank said. "I think some of them would probably rather play in front of their friends and family in a familiar environment, but they will sacrifice one game for the incredible experience."

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out Mike Frank's irishsportsdaily.com
Email Mike at mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net and tell him The Observer sent you.

Contact Chris Allen at callen10@nd.edu

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IRISH CELEBRATION

Notre Dame embraces Irish roots with Dublin opener, faces logistical challenges

By **ANDREW OWENS**
Assistant Managing Editor

DUBLIN — The Fighting Irish in Ireland.

It is a rare occasion that Notre Dame is able to celebrate its athletic identity in Ireland. Most assume the iconic moniker has always represented the program, but in reality that identity was not made official until 1927, according to University archives.

Earlier in its history, Notre Dame would compete athletically against local colleges, with press reports referring to teams by the school's religion. Although the entire roster was not composed of Catholic players or men of Irish descent, the team was typically referred to as the Catholics or the Irish.

Despite others using the nickname as a slur, Notre Dame embraced it. After all, it served as a reminder of the school's heritage: more than a name or a people — a faith. It became a symbol for anyone discriminated against and represented the core values of the Catholic institution.

Logistics of the trip

Notre Dame and Navy are hardly strangers — this is the 86th consecutive year the schools have played, 13 years longer than the University has carried the 'Fighting Irish' nickname — but Saturday's season opener will carry unfamiliar, though not unprecedented, flair.

The festivities surrounding the Emerald Isle Classic will become cherished memories for the estimated 35,000 Americans traveling to Dublin for a football game. For those involved

in the competition, the logistics are simply a nightmare.

"It is incredibly challenging," Notre Dame Director of Athletics Jack Swarbrick said. "Not every 18-year-old has a passport, so you start with basic things like that. You have to get everybody a passport, plus the customs issues. That's one logistical example of it and it's everything about the sleep cycle of the team and the dietary needs."

Two-year-old Aviva Stadium, the site of Saturday's contest, hosts an Irish rugby team and Ireland's national soccer squad. The facility underwent a makeover in recent weeks to house American football, but some aspects of the stadium simply cannot be modified.

Notre Dame director of football operations Chad Klunder and equipment manager Ryan Grooms traveled to the stadium in May to make preparations for Saturday's game. One of the challenges: Notre Dame's locker room in Ireland contains 28 lockers, but roughly 100 players are traveling with the team. As a solution, the Irish offense will double up each locker while the defense uses an auxiliary room adjacent to the locker room.

"It's a very complicated deal, and I couldn't be prouder of our staff for pulling it off," said Swarbrick, who added that several truckloads of equipment would be hauled from Aviva Stadium to Dublin International Airport throughout the game to get a head start on passing through customs.

Irish coach Brian Kelly said his primary concern is how the trip — and the quick turnaround — affects the players later in September.

"What I'm worried about is sleep, loss of sleep, and a cumulative fatigue factor that bites us three, four weeks down the road," said Kelly, whose team faces Michigan State and Michigan in weeks three and four, respectively, before a bye week. "So my concerns are more in not just one game but three or four weeks."

"I love everything about Ireland. I'm not a big fan of playing football games in Ireland."

Senior captain Manti Te'o said the players need to keep each other in check and keep the trip in perspective: They have a job to accomplish, not a vacation to enjoy.

"For me, it's strictly business," he said. "I'll enjoy Ireland while I can, but I'm focusing on the game."

"I'm not going to say it won't be a distraction. It's definitely going to be a distraction."

An international affair

Sixteen years ago, Notre Dame played in Ireland for the first time (and made its second international appearance in program history) when it defeated Navy 54-27 in Dublin.

The field was soggy, the two sides had to share a sideline and played in front of 38,651 fans at cavernous Croke Park, a stadium with a capacity of 70,000.

Despite the problems and a midseason trip across the ocean, then-Irish coach Lou Holtz said he would jump at the opportunity to do it all over again.

"This was a great trip — I would definitely do it again," Holtz told The Observer in 1996. "I thought the game would be different [because of the environment], but it wasn't."

Whereas Kelly views the weekend as a business trip, Holtz saw it as a learning experience. He led the team on a trip to a monastery and a lecture at Trinity College and had players keep a journal of the trip as a way to remember the weekend.

As a sign of the times, the 1996 game — played at 8 a.m. EST — was tape-delayed by CBS until noon. With the majority of the TV timeouts eliminated from the broadcast, the game concluded in less than three hours.

"I enjoy playing the game on TV, but liked it without the TV timeouts," Holtz said. "If PBS is interested in televising our games, I think it would be tremendous."

Much like the Emerald Isle Classic, the 1996 Shamrock Classic was regarded at the time as the biggest tourist event in Dublin history, with an estimated \$25 million pumped into the Irish economy.

As in 1996, the student body will be largely absent from the festivities on the other side of the Atlantic in 2012. With the price tag of a trip to Dublin a hefty one and no interruption from the academic schedule, most students will watch the game in the early morning from the comfort of their residence halls and off-campus apartments and houses.

But when the group of fans that does travel abroad packs up and heads home Sunday, the trip will become a memory, a treasured link to the past and a reminder of some of the University's fundamental roots an ocean away.

Contact Andrew Owens at
aowens2@nd.edu





GRANT TOBIN | The Observer



Observer File Photo

NAVY PASSING

No, that’s not a misprint. The two words a couple lines up do indeed say “Navy Passing.” Although due to Navy’s option offense, the Midshipmen’s passing attack is nearly non-existent.

Despite the structure of the offense, look for Navy to pass the ball slightly more than in years past under the direction of new junior quarterback Trey Miller. Miller is a better passer than former Navy signal caller Kriss Proctor, who ran for more yards than he threw for last year. Irish fans should recognize Miller from last year’s 56-14 blowout win — a game in which he made his first career start. While Miller produced subpar numbers in South Bend, he gained valuable experience against the Irish that can only benefit him this year.

Notre Dame’s pass defense enters the season as one of the largest questions marks for the Irish. After losing both cornerbacks from last year and safety Harrison Smith to the NFL Draft, the secondary was set to plug in three new starters. But with the season-ending injury suffered by Lo Wood, freshman KeiVarae Russell was thrust into the starting lineup. Despite the inexperience, the secondary should have no problems defending Navy’s primitive passing game.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

NAVY RUSHING

The triple option has been Navy’s equalizer for years now in its attempt to compete with the big boys of college football. The deceptive and quick option had handed Notre Dame losses in three of the previous four meetings before last year’s rout. In the 42-point victory over the Midshipmen last year, the Irish defense seemed to have the option figured out, holding Navy to 196 yards on 50 carries.

While the system remains the same, the personnel has changed a lot for Navy. It lost Proctor and former fullback Alexander Teich, their top two rushers last season who combined for nearly 2,000 yards on the ground. Senior slot back Gee Gee Greene is Navy’s top returning rusher after racking up more than 500 yards.

Notre Dame’s front seven, led by All-American senior linebacker Manti Te’o

and mammoth sophomore defensive end Stephon Tuitt, is now a cohesive unit capable of containing Navy’s rushing game. The deep rotation of defensive linemen that includes junior Louis Nix and graduate student Kapron Lewis-Moore should be able to withstand Navy’s notorious cut blocks at the line of scrimmage.

Navy will be assured of large rushing numbers Saturday. Whether they are effective, though, is a different question.

EDGE: EVEN

NAVY OFFENSIVE COACHING

Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo has taken the Midshipmen to new heights against Notre Dame in recent years and will have his guys mentally prepared for the season opener. But Notre Dame defensive coordinator Bob Diaco has faced three triple option teams since the Navy debacle in 2010 and shut them all down.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

NAVY SPECIAL TEAMS

Navy entered camp not with a quarterback controversy but with a kicker controversy. The Midshipmen named freshman Nick Sloan the placekicker this past week despite inconsistent performances in practice. Sloan’s inexperience could hurt Navy if the Midshipmen keep this game close until the end.

In the return game, Navy brings back junior Marcus Thomas and senior Bo Snelson to handle kickoff duties while junior Shawn Lynch will make his debut at punt return. Thomas was solid a year ago, averaging 22 yards per return and scoring a touchdown.

EDGE: EVEN

NAVY SCHEDULE

- Sept. 1 vs. Notre Dame
- Sept. 15 @ Penn State
- Sept. 22 VMI
- Sept. 29 San Jose State
- Oct. 6 @ Air Force
- Oct. 12 Central Michigan
- Oct. 20 Indiana
- Oct. 27 @ East Carolina
- Nov. 3 Florida Atlantic
- Nov. 10 @ Troy
- Nov. 17 Texas State
- Dec. 8 vs. Army

HEAD TO HEAD

NAVY



(Jr.) **Casey Bolena** **88** WR
(Sr.) Jonathan Gazaille 89

(Sr.) **John Howell** **33** SB
(Jr.) Darius Staten 20

(Sr.) **Ryan Paulson** **68** LT
(Sr.) Andrew Barker 78

(Sr.) **Josh Cabral** **65** LG
(Fr.) E.K. Binns 57

(Jr.) **Graham Vickers** **70** C
(So.) Tanner Fleming 75

(So.) **Jake Zuzek** **64** RG
(Jr.) Thomas Stone 71

(So.) **Bradyn Heap** **62** RT
(Sr.) Andrew Barker 78

(Sr.) **Gee Gee Greene** **21** SB
(Sr.) Bo Snelson 4

(Jr.) **Shawn Lynch** **87** WR
(Sr.) John O’Boyle 83

(So.) **Parrish Gaines** **2** CB
(Fr.) Kwazel Bertrand 17

(So.) **Jordan Drake** **13** OLB
(Jr.) DJ Sargenti 52

(Sr.) **Wes Henderson** **99** DE
(Sr.) Josh Dowling-Fitzpatrick 59

(Jr.) **Barry Dabney** **69** NG
(Jr.) Travis Bridges 72

(Jr.) **Evan Palelei** **58** DE
(Sr.) Collin Sturdivant 49

(Sr.) **Keegan Wetzel** **48** OLB
(So.) Obi Uzoma 44

(Jr.) **Jonathan Wev** **25** CB
(Fr.) Shelley White 7

(So.) **Chris Ferguson** **23** S
(Jr.) Wave Ryder 8

(Sr.) **Matt Warrick** **51** ILB
(Jr.) Cody Peterson 53

(Sr.) **Brye French** **50** ILB
(Sr.) John Michael Nurthen 40

(Sr.) **Tra’ves Bush** **9** S
(So.) James Britton 3

(Fr.) **Nick Sloan** **6** PK
(Fr.) Austin Grebe 82

(So.) **Pablo Beltran** **11** P
(Jr.) Justin Haan 43

(Jr.) **Shawn Lynch** **87** PR
(Sr.) Gee Gee Greene 21

(So.) **Colin Amerau** **18** KO
(Fr.) Austin Grebe 82

(Jr.) **Marcus Thomas** **26** KR
(Sr.) Bo Snelson 4

(So.) **Joe Cardona** **93** LS
(Sr.) Billy Coats 92



Allan Joseph
Editor-in-Chief



Andrew Owens
Assistant Managing Editor



Chris Allen
Sports Editor

On paper, predicting this game is a fool’s errand: Navy games are always unpredictable, season openers even more so and games in Ireland ... well, who knows?

The reality is much easier than that, even with the loss of two starters to suspension. Notre Dame has come a long way from the debacle in the Meadowlands two years ago, and Navy has since lost Ricky Dobbs. The Irish defense is much more disciplined, and Everett Golson is running an offense that’s finally comfortable with the Brian Kelly system.

Especially considering the hype around this game, Navy might give Notre Dame a scare for a quarter or so. But it won’t last much longer than that. It’s going to be one amazing Irish party in Aviva Stadium.

Typically the anticipation of the season opener carries with it a rosy outlook. Each team’s record is unblemished, and surely this is the year everything comes together for your favorite program. In 2012, however, Saturday’s season opener should be more of a sigh of relief that the off-season is over. After recruiting defections and season-ending injuries with suspensions sprinkled in, the focus is back on the game of football. While the trip is a once-in-a-lifetime affair for fans, it’s a headache for coaches and players. Navy is used to ignoring distractions and playing disciplined football, and we’ll see if the Irish can do the same. An adequate showing by the offense will be aided by a dominating effort by the defense and a successful halt of the triple option.

From the time the Emerald Isle Classic was announced, it is the festivities rather than the football that has dominated the talk. But the beauty of big football events is when the festivities die down, the game played between the white lines is the same game the players have played their whole lives. I get the sense from talking to players that the international aspect of this game does not excite them much.

In year three of his tenure, Brian Kelly has assembled the dominant play around the line of scrimmage that should make the Irish less susceptible to the fluke upset all season. Golson will make a few plays — and a few mistakes — but the Irish will walk off the field 1-0 knowing bigger tests await Stateside.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 31, Navy 14

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 27, Navy 13

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 33, Navy 21

PO HEAD



NOTRE DAME

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

43 Josh Atkinson (So.)

OLB **30** **Ben Councell** (So.)

45 Romeo Okwara (Fr.)

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

91 Sheldon Day (Fr.)

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

96 Kona Schwenke (Jr.)

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

50 Chase Hounshell (So.)

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

11 Ishaq Williams (So.)

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

21 Jalen Brown (So.)

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

16 DaVaris Daniels (So.)

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

19 Davonte' Neal (Fr.)

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

78 Ronnie Stanley (Fr.)

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

65 Conor Hanratty (So.)

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

57 Mike Golic Jr. (Gr.)

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

65 Conor Hanratty (So.)

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

72 Nick Martin (So.)

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

18 Beh Koyack (So.)

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

87 Daniel Smith (Jr.)

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

40 Nick Tausch (Sr.)

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

6 Theo Riddick (Sr.)

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

61 Scott Daly (Fr.)

S **17** **Zeke Motta** (Sr.)

41 Matthias Farley (So.)

ILB **48** **Dan Fox** (Sr.)

59 Jarrett Grace (So.)

ILB **5** **Manti Te'o** (Sr.)

59 Jarrett Grace (So.)

S **26** **Jamoris Slaughter** (Gr.)

24 Chris Salvi (Sr.)

RB **6** **Theo Riddick** (Sr.)

4 George Atkinson (So.)

QB **5** **Everett Golson** (So.)

12 Andrew Hendrix (Jr.)

PK **40** **Nick Tausch** (Sr.)

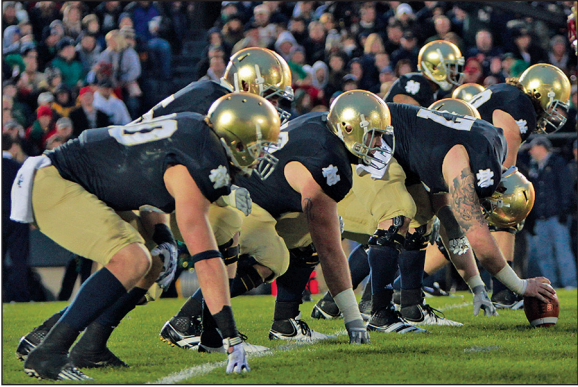
27 Kyle Brindza (So.)

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

27 Kyle Brindza (So.)

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

81 John Goodman (Gr.)



Observer File Photo



TOM YOUNG | The Observer

IRISH PASSING

Much like Navy, Notre Dame will be ushering in a new era under center with a mobile and inexperience signal caller. After surviving a four-man quarterback derby, sophomore quarterback Everett Golson will take his first snap as Notre Dame's starter against Navy. While fans have not seen Golson in action since the Blue-Gold Game in April, he promises to add arm strength and a running dimension to the Notre Dame offense.

Golson will not have the benefit of throwing to departed receiver Michael Floyd but he will have something close in senior tight end Tyler Eifert. The Irish coaching staff plans on using the 6-foot-6 Fort Wayne, Ind., native in a variety of ways this season, including split out wide against smaller defenders. His versatility and athleticism will cause fits for Navy's undersized secondary, whose biggest starter weighs in at just 196 pounds.

Expect some mistakes out of Golson but his receving corps should be too much for the Midshipmen.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH RUSHING

Last year, Notre Dame ran for an unreal seven touchdowns against Navy. Amazingly enough, due to graduation and suspensions, sophomore running back George Atkinson is the only player on Saturday's roster that scored in the six-touchdown romp. Atkinson will see plenty of carries as the bigger back while senior Theo Riddick will earn the lion's share of action after senior Cierre Wood's suspension. Golson's ability to run should also pose problems for the Navy defense.

Despite the lack of returning experience in the backfield, Notre Dame has one big advantage — literally. The Irish offensive line returns four players who saw significant playing time during last season's eight-win campaign. Anchored by graduate student center Braxton Cave, the offensive line has only one member under 300 pounds. The Midshipmen, meanwhile, have no players weighing more than 300 pounds.

The Navy front seven also suffered a big blow when projected starter and sophomore outside linebacker suffered a knee

injury that will keep him out an extended period. A defense that gave up 442 total yards to the Irish last October needed all the help it could get.

The Irish would be hard-pressed to top last year's total of seven rushing touchdowns but running the ball against an undersized front should not be an issue.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

After two years under Brian Kelly, the Irish will finally be running an offense that resembles his regimes at Central Michigan and Cininnati. Golson's versatility will give Notre Dame additional options in Kelly's spread offense.

Navy, meanwhile, has given up at least 38 points in three of its last eight games, dating back to last year.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior kicker Nick Tausch will make his return to the playing field after the departure of David Ruffer and a solid camp, according to the coaching staff. Following a rough start to last season, senior Ben Turk continuously improved as the season progressed although the Irish may not need him much Saturday — Notre Dame punted just once during last year's game.

Irish fans will be delighted to see familiar face George Atkinson (and his two return touchdowns from 2011) returning kickoffs while freshman Davonte' Neal will handle the punt return duties. Notre Dame managed just three total yards on punt returns during the regular season in 2011.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH SCHEDULE

Sept. 1 **vs. Navy**
Sept. 8 **Purdue**
Sept. 15 **@ Michigan St.**
Sept. 22 **Michigan**
Oct. 6 **vs. Miami**
Oct. 13 **Stanford**
Oct. 20 **BYU**
Oct. 27 **@ Oklahoma**
Nov. 3 **Pittsburgh**
Nov. 10 **@ Boston College**
Nov. 17 **Wake Forest**
Nov. 24 **@ USC**



Andrew Gastelum
Associate Sports Editor



Matthew DeFranks
Associate Sports Editor

Since last season there have been a lot of headlines swirling around the Irish, and most of them have nothing to do with football: Key players leaving the program, suspensions to big names, controversial jersey designs and even a trip to play the season opener across the pond. The real question is: Are the Irish prepared for the season?

With all the distractions, we will see very soon how much this Irish team has progressed and matured since last season in a key year for the Kelly campaign. One can never tell with Navy, but the fact that Notre Dame has had the preseason to prepare for the Midshipmen's distinct offense is a definite advantage. Look for the Irish rushing attack to have a field day against a defense that gave up seven rushing touchdowns in last year's matchup.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 30, Navy 10

Nothing screams "Welcome to college football season" more than a season-opening game in Dublin. No? Okay, you're right. The game yells something more like "Instead of beating Navy in America, we'll give them some hope in Europe."

The hype surrounding this game, its setting, its shoes and its quarterbacks have overshadowed some simple facts: Notre Dame will be starting a first-year quarterback without its starting running back while trotting out an inexperienced secondary. Good thing none of that matters when you play Navy's porous run defense and its option attack on offense.

Everett Golson will make some mistakes but he can afford to against a service academy in the season opener.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 27, Navy 13

RV/24NR/NR

Notre Dame vs. Navy

(0-0)(0-0)

Aviva Stadium • Dublin

on CBS at 9:10 a.m. ET

Eifert, Te'o among four captains selected

By **ANDREW GASTELUM**
Associate Sports Editor

Traditionally, team captains are the vocal engines of a well-oiled machine. As the focal points of a huddle, they holler at their teammates in practice and roar across the white lines before and after the whistle.

But Notre Dame's four captains — linebacker Manti Te'o, tight end Tyler Eifert, offensive tackle Zack Martin and defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore — were at a loss for words, simply humbled as the next to be added to the exclusive index of Irish captaincy.

"I wasn't expecting it to be honest with you," Te'o said. "I wasn't really thinking about it ... I was really humbled. I never thought it would happen. [I was] just [a kid] coming from Hawaii, trying to make his name, do well in football and help his team win."

Irish coach Brian Kelly and the rest of the coaching staff delivered the unexpected announcement Monday after practice.

"I think what struck me more than anything else is when they got up before their teammates and the things they said about

"It's one thing to be named captain, but it's another thing for your teammates to come up to you and tell you that you deserve it."

Manti Te'o
Irish linebacker

being a captain at Notre Dame," Kelly said. "In one particular instance, [Lewis-Moore] was brought to tears. You love to see the passion and love for Notre Dame and their teammates."

Even the usually vociferous Lewis-Moore was stunned. The same lineman who quickly became known as the unofficial voice of the Leprechaun Legion for his intimidating antics in the front row of basketball games this past year struggled to find the words to describe his emotions.

"I was just thinking about five years ago coming here as a 225-pound supposedly outside linebacker and now it is just an unbelievable journey ... The whole day was just a big emotion for me. Thinking how far I've come and what I've been through."

After recording a career-high 62 tackles in 2010, the graduate student senior suffered a season-ending knee injury Oct. 22 during the 31-17 loss to USC. But Lewis-Moore said neither the injury nor his newfound captaincy will change his mentality heading into his final season with the Irish.

"I really can't explain it. It's something I'm so humbled about. Being here for five years,

it's like a dream come true. It's a big responsibility but I am going to keep being me ... I'm just going to keep being Kapron-Lewis Moore. I'm going to keep being loud, keep bringing the energy. I might do a couple dance moves."

Te'o, a consensus preseason All-American after consecutive 125-plus tackle seasons, issued a similar vow in hopes of inspiring his teammates after turning down a projected first-round selection in April's NFL Draft.

"I think a captain is just a title. That's just a title you're given. For me, I've always tried to be a great leader," he said. "The title of being captain doesn't change the way I do things. I'm still going to try to [help] my teammates the best way I know how, both on and off the field and be an example to them and just do what I can to help us win."

Like Te'o, Martin has started every game the past two seasons. A model of consistency at left tackle, Martin flatly denied being the rah-rah member of an offensive line that cleared the way for a rushing attack averaging 4.8 yards per carry in 2011.

"I would say I am more of an example guy," Martin said. "Maybe more vocal to the O-line ... When I see an opportunity where I need to be vocal, I will be. But besides that I will be an example guy."

Eifert said he walks a similar route as the left tackle he often lines up next to. The 6-foot-6 tight end had a breakout 2011 with 803 receiving yards and five touchdowns and 90 receptions, earning him a finalist nomination for the John Mackey Award given to the nation's top tight end.

"It's pretty cool [to be a captain]. I've never really even dreamed of being in this position, but it's great to actually be [a captain]. It's really quite an honor," Eifert said. "I told [the team] that they can expect the same thing that I've done my whole time here and that I'm going to come to work every day with a positive attitude and a good work ethic. I just want to be someone who can be reliable and accountable."

Te'o, meanwhile, said the biggest honor wasn't the proverbial "C" he received from his coaches, but the encouragement and support he received from his teammates just before his last season opener in an Irish uniform.

"It's one thing to be named captain, but it's another things for your teammates to come up to you and tell you that you deserve it," Te'o said.

"Them coming up to me and telling me I deserve it meant more to me than the title because it goes to show that I earned their respect and I earned their trust and now I just have got to keep doing what I am doing."

Contact Andrew Gastelum at agastell@nd.edu



NICOLE TOCZAUER | The Observer

Senior linebacker Manti Te'o approaches a blocker in the 56-14 Irish win over Navy on Oct. 29, 2011. Te'o was selected by Irish coach Brian Kelly to serve as one of four captains during the 2012 season.

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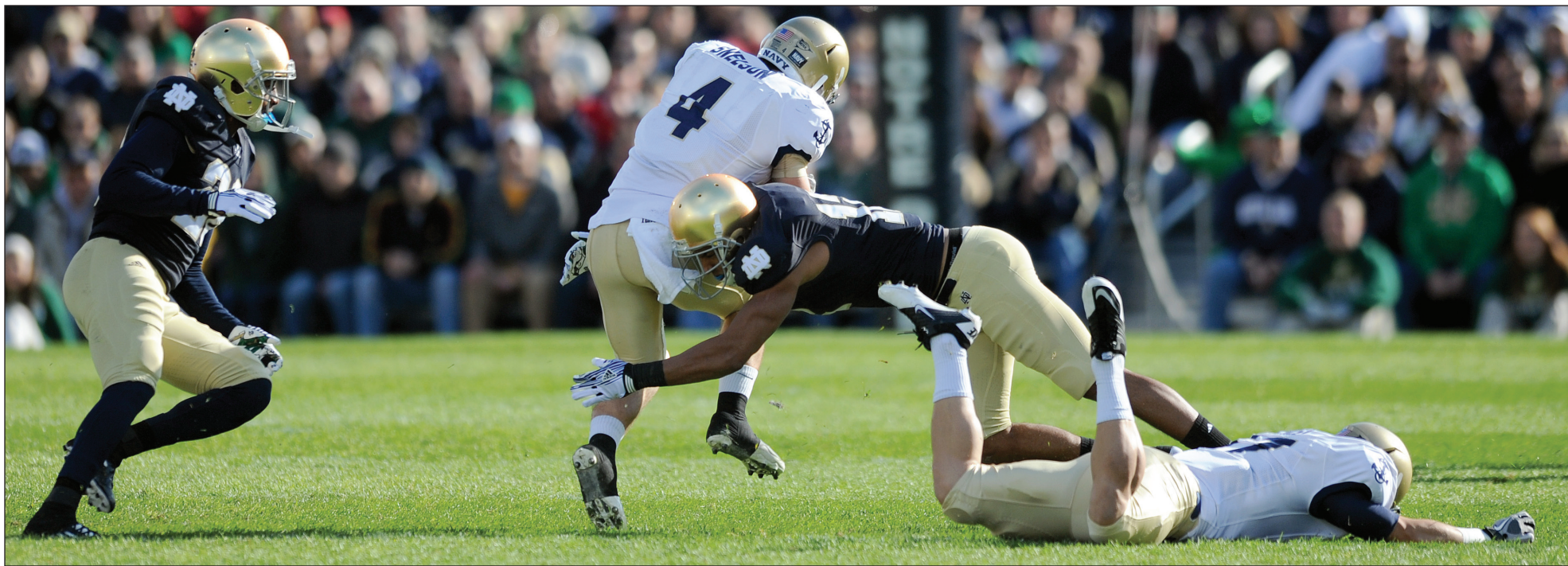
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Navy triple option to challenge defense



Observer File Photo

Former Irish cornerback Robert Blanton wraps up Navy ballcarrier Bo Snelson during Notre Dame's 56-14 victory over the Midshipmen on Oct. 29, 2011. Notre Dame and Navy will kick off the 2012 season Saturday in the long-awaited Emerald Isle Classic in Dublin, the 86th meeting between the schools.

By **MATTHEW DeFRANKS**
Associate Sports Editor

Before last season's 56-14 drubbing of Navy, Notre Dame had lost three of the previous four games against the Midshipmen because of one key culprit — the triple option.

In the three losses, the Irish failed to hold Navy to less than

35 points twice and allowed the Midshipmen to rush for at least 257 yards in each victory.

Since Oct. 23, 2010, when Navy beat Notre Dame 35-17, Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco has seemed to figure out how to stop the triple option. The Irish have played three option teams since then (Army, Air Force and Navy again) and earned three

victories, winning by an average of nearly 31 points.

Heading into this year's opener, Navy will be breaking in a new quarterback after losing departed signal caller Kriss Proctor, who was the only Midshipmen player to top 1,000 yards on the ground in 2011. Junior Trey Miller will take the reins of the option attack for the

Midshipmen.

Miller earned his first and only career start against Notre Dame during Navy's 42-point loss a year ago. Miller was 5-for-13 for 33 yards through the air while rushing for 55 yards during the defeat.

Navy will not only need Miller's production on the ground but also his prowess

through the air to keep the Irish from stacking the box against the Midshipmen's green backfield.

Senior slot back Gee Greene, however, will help stabilize a Navy offense under new direction.

"[Greene] makes their offense have that ability to get on the perimeter," Irish coach Brian Kelly said. "So it's going to be a great opportunity for us. I'm excited to see our football team play."

Greene, who caught four touchdown passes in 2011, is also a threat to catch the ball out of the backfield. With leading returning receiver Brandon Turner not traveling with the team, Greene's 11 receptions from a year ago are the most by any Midshipman playing in Dublin on Saturday.

Unlike most offenses, Navy's attack features four players (the quarterback, the fullback and the two slot backs) that will carry the ball. Their scheme relies on misdirection and deception that has fooled the Irish before.

"[Navy is a] very difficult opponent to play, especially in your opener, but any time," Kelly said. "Ken Niumatalolo, great coach, obviously does as well as anybody in the country at taking his talent and getting it to execute on both sides of the ball, and they have shown that they can do that week in and week out."

Navy also loses former fullback Alexander Teich, who torched Notre Dame two years ago for 210 yards in helping the Midshipmen compile 367 rushing yards. Unproven sophomore Noah Copeland will try to replace Teich at fullback. Copeland only had two carries during his freshman campaign.

Starting opposite Greene at the other slot back position will be senior John Howell, who had 340 yards rushing last season.

The Irish will try to stop the triple option for the second straight year when they open their season against the Midshipmen on Saturday morning at 9 a.m.

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