

IRISH INSIDER

NOTRE DAME 28, TEMPLE 6 | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2013 | NDSMCOBSERVER.COM

Strong out of the gate

Rees connects with Daniels twice in opening minutes as Irish roll past Temple in opener

ND needs to convert yards into points



Matthew DeFranks
Assistant Managing Editor

Something did not add up. No. 14 Notre Dame's offense rolled up 543 yards of offense and only put up four touchdowns in a 28-6 win over Temple on Saturday. To put that in perspective, 543 yards per game would have been good for the fifth-best offense in 2012 (one spot ahead of Oregon, by the way). But how about 28 points? That would have put the Irish at 70th in the nation in scoring offense a season ago, behind the likes of Troy and Western Kentucky. Senior quarterback Tommy Rees and the Irish offense had no problem moving the ball, clearly. Notre Dame gained at least 40 yards and dipped into Temple territory on every drive until the fourth quarter. But four of those drives ended without points.

Special teams is partly to blame for that, though, as graduate student Nick Tausch and junior Kyle Brindza both missed makeable field goals, but the Irish offense has to take some of the blame. On both drives that ended in punts in the first half, the Irish threw the ball three times in a row right before they were forced to punt.

Notre Dame was not able to finish drives the way they should have against an inferior opponent. The score should not have been close, and the Irish should have at least broken the 30-point mark after exploding for more than 500 yards on offense.

Rees had a career day with 346 passing yards. Senior receiver TJ Jones had a career day with 138 receiving yards. Junior receiver DaVaris Daniels scored his first two career touchdowns. Junior running back Amir Carlisle impressed in his debut, averaging just fewer than 10 yards per carry.

But the result was just a mediocre one against a team from a conference with one ranked team. When the Irish get into the meat of their schedule against Oklahoma, USC and



JOHN NING | The Observer

Irish junior receiver DaVaris Daniels, left, celebrates the first of his two first-quarter touchdowns with his teammates during Notre Dame's 28-6 victory over Temple in Saturday's season-opener at home.

By SAMANTHA ZUBA
Sports Writer

No. 14 Notre Dame set a blistering tempo with its opening drive and drove the pace of the game all the way to a 28-6 victory over Temple in the season opener on Saturday at Notre Dame Stadium.

The Irish (1-0) finished their opening touchdown drive in a breezy 1:26 and followed with a second brisk scoring sequence, completed in 1:01.

Irish coach Brian Kelly praised senior quarterback Tommy Rees' execution of the efficient drives.

"Obviously a lot of the questions coming in is 'Could we push the ball down the field?'" Kelly said. "I think we answered a lot of those questions right away with [Rees'] ability to push the ball down the field. I thought

his patience was better, and it will continue to get better. So I was pleased with his performance, and he knows he can play better."

Rees acknowledged he has work to do, despite his success against the Owls (0-1). Before exiting in the fourth quarter for fellow senior quarterback Andrew Hendrix, Rees was 16-for-23 with 346 passing yards and three touchdowns. It was Rees' third career game with at least 300 passing yards, but 346 set a new career-high.

"We had an opportunity to make some big plays which we did and we're happy with the performance," Rees said. "There is still a lot of work to go, and we know that and we're ready to move forward."

Several Notre Dame players set personal records or achieved career firsts.

On the first play from scrimmage and with his first carry for Notre Dame, junior running back Amir Carlisle scampered 45 yards down the left sideline into Temple territory. Two plays later, junior receiver DaVaris Daniels hauled in his first career touchdown reception on a 32-yard strike from Rees less than 90 seconds into the game.

Daniels quickly followed his first career touchdown with his second. Rees found Daniels a second time, again for 32 yards. Daniels ran a post-corner route and snagged the pass despite coverage from Temple junior cornerback Anthony Robey. The scores put Notre Dame up 14-0 just 4:41 into the first quarter.

Rees said the touchdown was a result of good communication and a good read.

"[Daniels] did a great job of understanding where the corner was playing him," Rees said. "He cut on a high angle. I knew I saw that pre snap that we had a pretty good shot out there with the leverage the corner was playing. And DaVaris is a great route-runner."

A 51-yard catch-and-run by senior receiver TJ Jones on the first play of the drive set up the scoring opportunity. The reception was the second longest in Jones' career.

Career days from Rees, Jones power balanced offense

By VICKY JACOBSEN
Sports Writer

For many Irish fans, it might be difficult to decide on a favorite moment in No. 14 Notre Dame's 28-6 season-opening win over Temple on Saturday.

There was junior running back Amir Carlisle's "Welcome to Notre Dame" moment, when he broke free for a 45-yard gain in the first play of the game, which was also his first play as a member of the Irish. There were also the two 32-yard touchdown passes from senior quarterback Tommy Rees to junior receiver DaVaris Daniels and junior tight end Troy Niklas' 66-yard run-after-the-catch touchdown before the half, to name a few.

But Daniels and Niklas were far from the only two Irish players to deliver significant contributions on a day highlighted by offensive variety. The Irish offense had six plays that gained over 30 yards, and five of those came from different receivers or rushers.

"I thought you saw what I was hoping for," Irish coach Brian Kelly said after the game. "You had Daniels catch a touchdown; you had [senior receiver] TJ Jones and obviously [sophomore receiver] Chris Brown. You had Troy Niklas and the running backs catch footballs. You had [freshman running back] Tarean Folston catching a nice ball coming out of the backfield. I think you're going to see great distribution of the football across the board, and it's going to be somebody new each week."

"TJ Jones is going to be in the mix every single week, because he's one of the best wide receivers in the country. But you're going to see a lot of guys contribute offensively. I think it's for the better, I really do. I think it gives us great balance across the board."

Jones said the offensive output on display offered a glimpse of what could turn out to be a highly efficient offense.

PLAYER OF THE GAME

TOMMY REES
NOTRE DAME QUARTERBACK

Rees threw for a career-high 346 yards to go with three passing touchdowns. The signal-caller did not commit any turnovers and made strong reads. Junior running back Amir Carlisle credited Rees with audibling on the first play from scrimmage, when Carlisle carried 45 yards into Temple territory.

REPORT CARD

A-

QUARTERBACKS

Tommy Rees silenced critics of his ability to push the ball down the field by connecting on six passes of more than 25 yards. Rees began with two perfect scoring drives, and avoided any big mistakes while passing for a career-high 346 yards.

B+

RUNNING BACKS

Junior Amir Carlisle got the Irish off to a strong start by bouncing outside for 45 yards. Juniors George Atkinson and Cam McDaniel chipped in, as well, as the Irish accumulated 188 yards on the ground. Freshmen Greg Bryant and Tarean Folston looked good in limited action.

A

RECEIVERS

Senior TJ Jones and junior DaVaris Daniels led the receiving corps in an impressive performance. The tri-captain Jones shined brightest by compiling a career-high 138 yards, but Daniels and junior tight end Troy Niklas combined for an impressive three scores.

B

OFFENSIVE LINE

The offensive line protected the quarterback reasonably well and the holes were there for the Irish backs to exploit. It was a good start for a unit with new faces in the mix, but the Owls did get to Rees once in the first quarter.

C+

DEFENSIVE LINE

The Irish only brought down Reilly once, as the Owls' quarterback repeatedly evaded the pass rush came up with 65 yards on the ground. For a unit as hyped as this one has been, it was a below-par performance.

B

LINEBACKERS

Senior outside linebacker Prince Shembo seemed to beat his man at will, but did not turn the constant pressure into a sack. Graduate student inside linebacker Dan Fox racked up a career-high 10 tackles.

B

DEFENSIVE BACKS

The secondary was content to give up 228 yards through the air, as the unit did a good job keeping everything in front of it. The back end did not give up any big plays, but they did not make any, either.

C-

SPECIAL TEAMS

Both graduate student Nick Tausch and junior Kyle Brindza missed very makeable field goals, and Brindza also booted two punts well into the endzone. Jones looked comfortable in his debut at punt-return, but kickoff coverage surrendered almost 30 return yards per return.

B+

COACHING

It was a good debut by the Irish, mostly because they got the win. The coaching staff got a solid performance out of Rees and prepared a number of freshmen to contribute.

OVERALL GPA: 3.04

Notre Dame secured itself a victory against an inferior team, but it was far from a perfect performance as both teams left points on the board. The Irish showed they have the talent to move the ball, but both sides of the ball showed a lack of consistency, albeit in a winning performance that bordered on dominance.

PLAY OF THE GAME

NIKLAS SCORES A 66-YARD TOUCHDOWN AT THE END OF THE HALF

After the Owls punched home a touchdown with 1:01 remaining in the first half to cut the Notre Dame lead to 14-6, Niklas sprinted up the seam, caught the pass from Rees and shook off multiple tacklers en route to the 66-yard score that recemented the Irish lead.



JOHN NING | The Observer

Irish junior running back George Atkinson tries to break free from Temple sophomore linebacker Tyler Matakevich on Saturday. Atkinson scored a third-quarter touchdown in the Notre Dame win.

Offense

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Today we showed a little bit of our ability to move the ball down field in the way that we want to," Jones said. "There are definitely some things we need to work on, but I think we got a glimpse of where our offense can go today."

Rees, who completed 16 of 23 pass attempts and threw three touchdowns with no interceptions, said he wasn't surprised by how well the offense gelled during the game.

"I had a lot of confidence in those guys. I'm with them every day, so I know the ability that they have," Rees said. "I knew they had the ability to make plays for us, and I'm happy they did it."

Even in a game filled with highlight-worthy plays from a number of different sources, experienced seniors Rees

and Jones stood out and set the tone for the offensive unit. Jones led the team with career-high 138 receiving yards despite not scoring a touchdown. Jones also made his debut as a punt-returner, gaining 23 yards on three returns.

"He made one bad decision where he did not field the punt, and I thought he made a great play late in the game where he fielded it in traffic, which we've struggled with over the last few years," Kelly said. "I think he's going to be really good at it as he continues to get more live playing time at that position. I'm pretty excited about watching him back there."

Rees also set a new personal record by throwing for 346 yards. It was also the first time Rees has thrown over 300 yards in a winning effort (his two previous 300-yard games came in losses to

Tulsa in 2010 and Michigan in 2011.) Communicating with his targets was the key to Rees' strong performance, Jones said.

"Any time there were checks, Tommy relayed them to the receivers and we relayed them to each other in case somebody didn't see it," he said. "When there was a bad play, he put us in a good play. And I think our communication was great."

That Rees and Jones peaked in the same game is a result of both experience and luck, Jones said.

"Tommy and I lived together for two a half years," Jones said. "We came in together, so we have a connection there. You have time to build on that since we enrolled. And definitely today the play calling came my way."

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Struggles

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Stanford, this type of performance will not fly.

The drives stalled a bit in the second quarter when the Irish could have pulled away. And the drives never really started in the fourth quarter when the Irish needed to put the game away (Notre Dame

started the quarter with two three-and-outs).

The offense was not bad, it just could have been so much better.

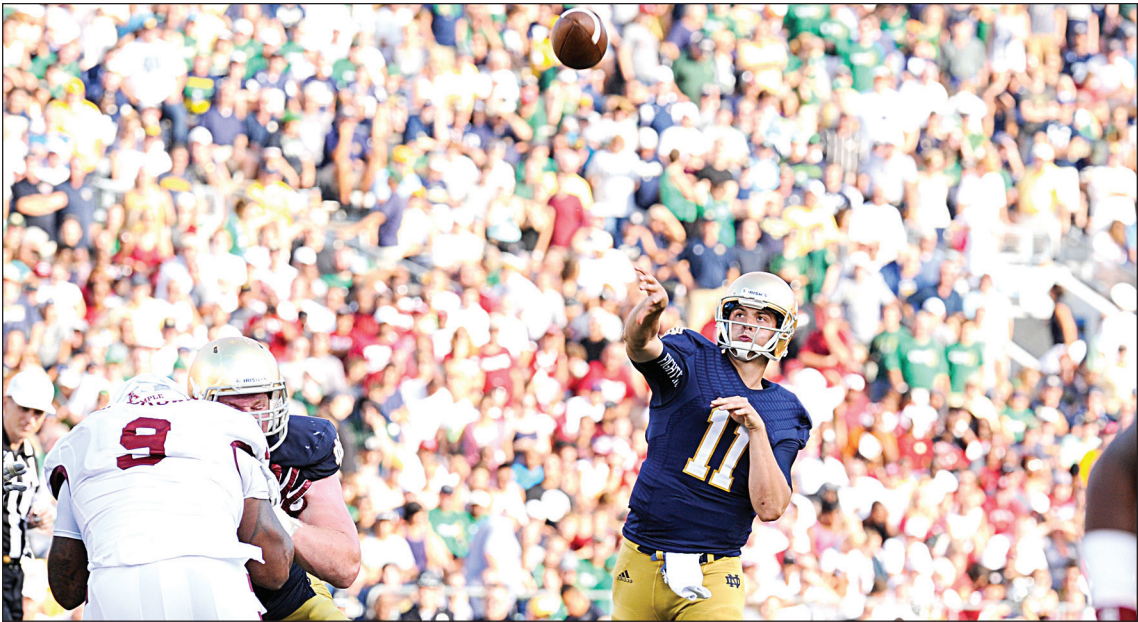
It was kind of like watching Wolfgang Puck cook hot dogs — yeah, it was probably delicious, but it could have been so much more. This Saturday against rival Michigan, the Irish will need Rees to cook up

something closer to filet mignon to come out of Ann Arbor with a victory.

All he needs is a little firepower.

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



JOHN NING | The Observer

Irish senior quarterback Tommy Rees lofts a pass downfield during Notre Dame's 28-6 win over Temple on Saturday. Rees threw for three touchdowns and a career-high 346 yards.

Victory

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

By the end of the game, Jones had hit another milestone. The Roswell, Ga., native logged his first 100-yard receiving game and set a career-high with 138 receiving yards.

Kelly attributed Jones' banner day to his ability to make something happen after the catch.

"I thought it was dynamic," Kelly said. "Dynamic is a word that I would use as a receiver when we're talking about after the catch. So he caught the football, and then he was dynamic after the catch. And that's what we were looking for from him."

Jones said he didn't know exactly how close he was to topping his personal best until the statistic appeared on the scoreboard.

"I actually thought I was still under until they showed it on ... the scoreboard thing," Jones said. "They showed I had 138. I didn't know how far I was under. I didn't know how far any of my plays were. I just knew they were long."

Temple threatened for the first time at the end of the first quarter. The Owls took over at their 20-yard line with 4:06 remaining in the period after a Notre Dame punt.

Junior quarterback Connor Reilly drove Temple to the Notre Dame 30-yard line before firing a pass that skipped just beyond the outstretched hands of diving sophomore tight end Romond Deloatch. Two plays later freshman kicker Jim Cooper missed a 32-yard field goal try to end the threat and the quarter.

The Owls set up another scoring opportunity on their first possession of the second quarter, but Cooper's 43-yard field goal attempt sailed wide right.

Temple punched across its only score when junior halfback Kenny Harper plunged through a small lane for a 1-yard score with 1:01 left in the first half. Irish sophomore defensive lineman Jarron Jones blocked the extra point attempt, however, to keep the score at 14-6.

Notre Dame's defense kept the Owls' offense off-balance by forcing hurried throws from Reilly. Junior defensive lineman Stephon Tuitt and senior outside linebacker Prince Shembo supplied much of the pressure on Reilly with several hurries. In the secondary, meanwhile, senior safety Austin Collinsworth and junior safety Matthias Farley prevented big plays downfield.

"What I like was the safety communication was outstanding. I thought Collinsworth did a very nice job of working with Matthias Farley," Kelly said. "I think that there's a seamless, natural transition on that defensive side of the ball."

Other than a first-quarter sack by sophomore nose tackle Matt Ioannidis, Rees enjoyed reliable protection.

The senior quarterback took advantage on a 66-yard touchdown pass up the seam to junior tight end Troy Niklas. The single-play drive took 18 seconds and provided the Irish with a 21-6 halftime lead. The reception more than doubled Niklas' previous career long of 30 yards,

set against Purdue in 2012, and was Niklas' second career touchdown.

"[Niklas] was wide open down the middle of the field, and Tommy did a good job of reading the coverage," Kelly said. "They were in their third and long coverage, and he outran the middle linebacker down the middle of the field."

Temple drove deep into Notre Dame territory to start the second half, but the Irish halted the Owls on the Notre Dame six-yard line. Under pressure from Shembo on fourth down, Reilly threw an incomplete pass intended for senior tight end Chris Coyer.

The Irish followed up the defensive stop with a 94-yard touchdown drive. Junior running backs George Atkinson, Amir Carlisle and Cam McDaniel shared the action and combined for 38 yards, including a 16-yard run from McDaniel.

Atkinson pushed low through traffic for a 2-yard score that settled the final result of 28-6.

The win marked Kelly's 200th as a head coach.

"I haven't really taken the time to think about it, other than a lot of the coaches that are with me today have been part of a lot of those wins," Kelly said. "And that's really, for me, pretty special."

The Irish travel to Ann Arbor, Mich., on Saturday to square off with the No. 17 Wolverines. Kickoff is set for 8 p.m.

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Niklas hauls in 66-yard TD

By VICKY JACOBSEN
Sports Writer

After the game, senior quarterback Tommy Rees said he wasn't sure if junior tight end Troy Niklas had made the catch that eventually resulted in a 66-yard touchdown in the final minute of the first half. But he said he felt pretty good about it.

"He's huge, so that helps," Rees said when asked about how good of a target Niklas is. "I couldn't see, to be honest. But once I saw big Troy running down, he's kind of hard to bring

down."

The touchdown was the second of Niklas' career as well as the longest reception of his career. The score put the Irish ahead, 21-6, going into halftime.

Tuitt notches sack

Junior defensive end Stephon Tuitt entered the 2013 campaign 19 pounds heavier than he was last year after off-season surgery to repair a hernia. Tuitt still managed to lead the Irish defensive line in pressuring Temple junior quarterback Connor Reilly throughout the

game, Tuitt had two solo tackles and assisted on another.

He also sacked Reilly for a 4-yard loss in the second quarter with the Owls knocking on the door of the redzone. It was Tuitt's 15th career sack, which puts him 10th on the list of Notre Dame players since the stat was first recorded in 1982. Tuitt also opened last year by getting to the quarterback, recording two sacks in Notre Dame's 50-10 victory over Navy.

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SCORING SUMMARY

	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	TOTAL
	0	6	0	0	6
	14	7	7	0	28

1

NOTRE DAME 7, TEMPLE 0

DaVaris Daniels 32-yard pass from Rees (Tausch kick)

 **13:34** *remaining*

Drive: Three plays, 77 yards, 1:26 elapsed

NOTRE DAME 14, TEMPLE 0

DaVaris Daniels 32-yard pass from Rees (Tausch kick)

 **10:19** *remaining*

Drive: Three plays, 87 yards, 1:01 elapsed

2

NOTRE DAME 14, TEMPLE 6

Kenny Harper 1-yard run (Cooper kick blocked)

 **1:01** *remaining*

Drive: Nine plays, 78 yards, 2:18 elapsed

NOTRE DAME 21, TEMPLE 6

Troy Niklas 66-yard pass from Rees (Tausch kick)

 **0:43** *remaining*

Drive: One play, 66 yards, 0:18 elapsed

3

NOTRE DAME 28, TEMPLE 6

George Atkinson 2-yard run (Tausch kick)

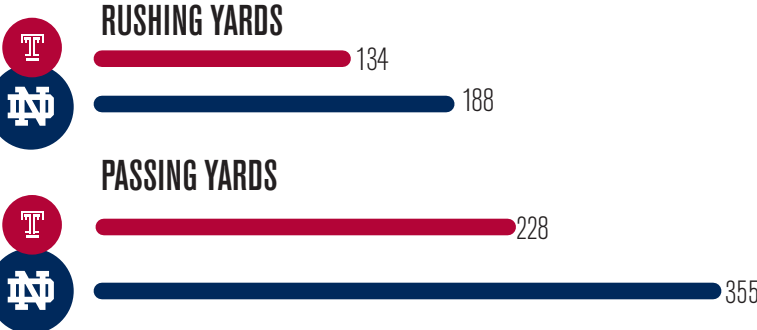
 **5:37** *remaining*

Drive: Seven plays, 94 yards, 3:36 elapsed

4

NO SCORING

STATISTICS



PASSING			
Rees	16-23-346	Reilly	23-46-228
Hendrix	1-4-9		
RUSHING			
Carlisle	7-68	Reilly	12-65
McDaniel	12-65	Williams	7-33
Atkinson	8-34	Gilmore	3-17
Folston	5-14	Coyer	1-14
Bryant	2-12	Harper	6-5
RECEIVING			
Jones	6-138	Alderman	4-65
Daniels	3-69	Coyer	4-39
Niklas	1-66	Christopher	3-25
Brown	3-57	Harper	2-23
Atkinson	1-11	Deloatch	1-20
Folston	1-9	Fitzpatrick	2-16
Carlisle	2-5	Three players	2-12

TACKLES			
Fox	10	Matakevich	11
Calabrese	9	Smith	8
Grace	7	Smith	7
Jackson	4	Robey	5
Shembo	4	Caponegro	5
Farley	3	Marshall	5
Schmidt	3	Ioannidis	3
KICKOFF RETURNS			
Atkinson	2-40	Fitzpatrick	3-88
SACKS			
Tuitt	1	Ioannidis	1



JOHN NING | The Observer

Senior receiver and tri-captain TJ Jones tries to break away from a pair of Temple defenders during Saturday's season-opening 28-6 win over the Owls. Jones logged a career-high 138 yards receiving on six receptions. He also recorded 23 punt-return yards.

IMPRESSIVE ON OPENING DAY

Notre Dame began the 2013 campaign on a good note, racking up 543 yards in a 28-6 victory over Temple. Senior quarterback Tommy Rees tossed three touchdowns and threw for a career-high 346 yards, while junior Amir Carlisle (7 rushes for 68 yards) led Notre Dame's five running backs to 193 yards on the ground. Irish coach Brian Kelly became the second-youngest coach to compile 200 wins.



JOHN NING | The Observer

Graduate student inside linebacker Carlo Calabrese was second on the team with nine total tackles.



KARLA MORENO | The Observer

Junior tight end Troy Niklas sprints into the end-zone, capping his 66-yard touchdown grab.



JOHN NING | The Observer

Freshman linebacker Jaylon Smith leaps to defend a pass from Owls junior quarterback Connor Reilly.



LAUREN FRITZ | The Observer

Senior receiver and tri-captain TJ Jones throws a stiff-arm at Temple junior cornerback Anthony Robey while racing down the sidelines on his career-long 51-yard reception in the first quarter.