

IRISH INSIDER

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CHAMPIONS



ZACH LLORENS | The Observer

Notre Dame celebrates after winning the national championship — the first in program history — Sunday at PPL Park in Chester, Pa. The Irish defeated Maryland, 2-1, behind goals from senior forward Leon Brown and senior center back Andrew O'Malley.

By VICKY JACOBSEN
Sports Writer

CHESTER, Pa. — It started with hands but finished with fingerprints.

No. 3 Notre Dame endured questionable hand ball calls to beat No. 5 Maryland 2-1 and claim the program's first national championship, putting its fingerprints all over the 2013 season and the championship trophy.

Senior forward Leon Brown and senior defender Andrew O'Malley scored for the Irish in the victory at PPL Park in Chester, Pa., on Sunday.

"Being able to take the program from somewhere it's never been, like an Elite Eight win, to a national championship win, is a huge jump," O'Malley said. "It's euphoric."

Even as the Irish (17-1-6, 7-1-3 ACC) basked in the championship

euphoria at the post-game press conference, Irish coach Bobby Clark alluded to the chippy play and controversy on the pitch.

"Obviously, I think we're all smiling big smiles," Clark said. "I thought it was a very hard-fought game. Any team coached by [Maryland head coach] Sasho Cirovski is going to be up for the fight. It wasn't the prettiest game; I think it's hard to play two games of that intensity in a period of two or three days, but I thought both teams put in a good shift."

Although both teams had chances to take a 1-0 lead, Maryland (17-3-5, 7-1-3) broke through first, scoring on a set piece in the 35th minute. After the Terrapins played a corner kick into the box, junior midfielder Alex Shinsky came up with possession and took a shot on goal, which was deflected by the elbow of Irish sophomore midfielder Pat Hodan.

The referees did not call a hand ball — despite the protests of several Terrapin players — but Maryland's senior forward Patrick Mullins grabbed the rebound, turned around in a crowd of Irish defenders, and knocked the ball into the back of the net to put his team ahead.

It was Mullins's 19th goal of the season, but after the game he said he used his hand to bring down the ball.

"That's not who I am, and I'm very disappointed in how that play resulted," Mullins said. "All I can control is my actions, and I'm not happy with that action."

The Maryland supporters, who spent much of the game singing songs like, "When the Terps go Marching In," erupted in a roar of approval, but they were soon chastened by the Irish.

Five minutes later, Irish sophomore midfielder Connor Klekota

headed a throw-in from senior defender Luke Mishu to Brown, who was waiting in the goal box. Brown slid and sent the ball sailing into the goal, past the reach of diving freshman goalkeeper Zack Steffen to tie the game at one.

"As a team, one of the mantras we had was to respond to what happened during the game," O'Malley said. "Not everything is going to go your way as a team, so you try to make sure that you're mentally strong enough to come back from something like that. Leon [Brown] came in and responded really well with a goal."

Brown came into the game in the 10th minute as a substitute for junior forward Vince Ciccirelli, who broke his collarbone when he fell over a Maryland defender and landed on his left shoulder. It was Brown's first goal since Notre Dame's 3-0 win over Michigan on Sept. 17, and his fifth of the season.

"When we lost our big striker [Vince Ciccirelli] with a broken collarbone, that was a blow, but Leon Brown came in and got the equalizing goal," Clark said. "We went behind, and that was definitely a blow, but we equalized fairly quickly, and that was Leon that did that."

A spectacular save from senior keeper Patrick Wall in the 41st minute prevented the Terrapins from entering halftime with the advantage. Shinsky's header came oh-so-close to crossing the goal line, but Wall grabbed the ball from out of the air and fell to the ground with the ball just in front of the goal. Wall finished the game with three saves.

The Irish took their first lead of the match in the 60th minute with a header from O'Malley. Senior forward Harrison Shipp

COMMENTARY

In year of firsts, ND looks experienced



Isaac Lorton
Sports Writer

It was a season of firsts for Notre Dame. It was the first time the Irish went to the College Cup.

It was the first time the Irish played in the National Championship game.

And for the first time ever, the Irish are national champions.

No. 5 Maryland was a veteran in the College Cup, winning two National Titles since 2005. But the No. 3 Irish must have missed that memo.

Notre Dame captured the College Cup with a 2-1 comeback win over Maryland.

The score was unsettled between the two teams from the regular season. On Oct. 8, the Irish and Maryland tied 1-1, even through double-overtime. It was fitting that the two ACC teams got to slug it out in the biggest game of the year. Maryland may have won the ACC Championships, but Notre Dame won the National Championships.

Irish coach Bobby Clark teaches a strict team mentality — defend as a team, attack as a team, play as a team — and the Irish did just that. Everyone was involved but the victory was paved by the Irish seniors.

Two senior captains, forward Harrison Shipp and center back Andrew O'Malley, connected on a set piece for the game-winning goal in the 60th minute and senior Leon Brown had the equalizing goal to tie the game up at 1-1 in the 40th minute.

Notre Dame's game-winning goal was the perfect way to send off two storied players of Notre Dame. After sophomore midfielder Evan Panken was fouled on the left side of the pitch, the wee wizard worked his magic on the delivery and O'Malley headed home the game-winner. It was O'Malley's third goal on the season and Shipp's 10th assist and 34th point.

Once Notre Dame got the lead, its stifling defense, led by senior center back Grant Van De Castele, took over and shut down the Terrapins.

For Brown, he did what he always does. He came off the bench and gave the Irish the

spark they needed on a complete hustle-and-muscle play, for his sixth goal of the season. With a man at his heels, Brown shrugged off the pulls and pushes of the Maryland defender and then narrowly slipped the ball past Maryland freshman keeper Zack Steffen for the equalizer.

Notre Dame's first and only goal ever conceded in the College Cup finals came in the 35th minute, to go down 1-0. And of course it was to Maryland senior Patrick Mullins.

Off of a Maryland corner, the ball was bouncing around the box and a Terrapin shot was put on net, Irish sophomore Patrick Hodan may or may not have used his arm to keep the ball out of the net. Maryland scored anyway.

Yet, Notre Dame is extremely lucky to not have that "hand ball" called. Hodan would have been automatically red-carded, the Terrapins awarded a penalty kick and Notre Dame would have had to play a man down for the remainder of the game. Hodan, who had scored six goals in the past five games, was Notre Dame's most prolific scorer throughout the tournament.

Both teams hesitated thinking the "hand ball" would be called. Everyone paused, except for Mullins. He didn't hesitate. The 2012 All-American and Hermann Trophy finalist two years running, gathered the ball amid the confusion and ripped a left-foot shot past Irish senior goalkeeper Patrick Wall.

But the Irish have a Hermann Trophy finalist and All-American of their own, in Shipp.

People may claim the hand ball affected Maryland's chances, but the Terrapins scored on the play anyhow, and then Notre Dame outplayed them for the remainder of the game.

It may have been Notre Dame's first appearance in the National Championships, but on their way to victory, the Irish looked like they had been there before.

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



ZACH LLORENS | The Observer

Senior center back Andrew O'Malley sends a header into the back of the net to give the Irish a 2-1 lead in the 60th minute of Notre Dame's national championship victory over Maryland on Sunday.

Champs

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had played a free kick into the 18-yard box, which O'Malley redirected into the net.

"Andrew O'Malley stuck that goal away ... he missed a few all season, I can tell you, but he saved that goal for the right time," Clark said. "It was a great goal. It would have been nice, we'd had a couple of chance to make it 3-1 just after that, but we somehow scorned these and I think they just tried to add to my gray hairs."

Maryland's last chance at forcing overtime came with one minute left on the clock when they lined up for a free kick. But Mullins' last-ditch effort missed

its mark and sailed away.

Cirovski acknowledged that it was a small consolation that he lost to Clarke. The two first met when Clarke was a veteran goalkeeper at Aberdeen and Cirovski was a young player trying to find his footing in the professional ranks.

"Let me congratulate Bobby Clark and Notre Dame on their first soccer championship," Cirovski said. "They are worthy winners. I'm genuinely happy for Bobby, for all he's done for college soccer, and I hope he enjoys this one. To lose today to a great Notre Dame team is no disgrace, nor any shame. There's heartache and disappointment in our locker room right now, but that will pass."

Clark, who also coached Stanford to a national title final and won the Scottish Cup, League Cup and Premier League Championship as a player with Aberdeen, said this achievement was one of the best in a very distinguished career.

"It's unbelievable. This is right up there with any championship I've ever won," Clark said. "I don't think you judge yourself purely on championships. I think you've got to be very careful with that ... To get a championship, a lot of things have to come together."

And that's exactly what happened for the Irish on Sunday afternoon.

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Shipp named Most Outstanding Offensive Player

Observer Staff Report

Irish senior forward Harry Shipp was named Most Outstanding Offensive Player of the College Cup. The MAC Hermann Trophy finalist notched an assist in both the semifinal and the championship match.

Shipp was also one of five Irish players to earn a spot on the College Cup All-Tournament team. Senior center backs Andrew O'Malley and Grant Van de Castele, junior midfielder Nick Besler and sophomore midfielder Patrick Hodan joined Shipp on the squad.

Irish soccer makes history

Notre Dame is the fourth school to win Division I men's and women's soccer national titles, joining North Carolina, Santa Clara and UCLA.

The Irish women's program won national championships in 2010, 2004 and 1995.

Unbeaten streak

After losing its only game of the season Oct. 26 to Virginia, Notre Dame went 9-0-1. During the 10-game unbeaten stretch, the Irish outscored opponents 25-8 and only trailed for a total of 6:33. The Irish fell behind for

1:52 versus Wake Forest in the third round and 4:41 against the Terrapins on Sunday.

The 'Boss' earns first title

Irish head coach Bobby Clark won his first national championship in his 27th year as a collegiate head coach. Clark led Stanford to the College Cup final in 1998, but the Cardinal lost to Indiana, 3-1.

Clark made his 18th NCAA tournament appearance all-time and his 12th in 13 seasons at Notre Dame. In his career, Clark is now 24-15-3 in the NCAA tournament, including a 15-10-1 mark at Notre Dame.

IRISH SOCCER THROUGH THE YEARS

SEPT. 16, 1977 — Tied Dayton 3-3 in first game as a varsity team.

NOV. 13, 1988 — Made first NCAA tournament appearance, losing 2-0 to Southern Methodist.

NOV. 24, 1996 — Won first NCAA tournament game with a 1-0 victory over No. 3 UNC-Greensboro.

JAN. 19, 2001 — Hired Bobby Clark as head coach.

NOV. 26, 2003 — Appeared in its first NCAA tournament game as a seeded team. The No. 5 Irish beat Wisconsin-Milwaukee 4-1.

DEC. 14, 2004 — Goalkeeper Chris Sawyer became Notre Dame's first NSCAA first-team All-American. The Irish have had six since, including senior forward Harry Shipp.

NOV. 18, 2006 — Advanced to the NCAA quarterfinals for the first time with a 1-0 win over No. 5 Maryland. The Irish lost to No. 4 Virginia in the next round, 3-2.

DEC. 2, 2006 — Forward Joseph Lapira won the MAC Hermann Trophy, the most pres-

tigious award in college soccer. He remains the only Irish player to win the award.

DEC. 8, 2007 — Lost to Wake Forest 1-0 in the NCAA quarterfinals. Prior to this season, it was the last time Notre Dame had advanced that far.

NOV. 12, 2012 — Earned the No. 1 overall seed in the NCAA tournament for the first time in program history. Notre Dame beat Michigan State 3-0 in the round of 32.

SEPT. 8, 2013 — Tied No. 1 North Carolina 1-1 in its first ACC game ever. The Irish moved to the ACC from the Big East after

winning three conference tournament championships in the Big East.

OCT. 8, 2013 — Tied No. 5 Maryland, 1-1, at Alumni Stadium. The meeting was the only one between the teams this year prior to Sunday's title game.

OCT. 26, 2013 — Lost to No. 19 Virginia, 2-0, at Alumni Stadium. The loss was Notre Dame's only defeat of the season.

NOV. 8, 2013 — Defeated Pittsburgh 2-0 in the final game of the regular season. The Irish shared the regular-season ACC championship with Maryland.

NOV. 15, 2013 — Knocked out of the ACC tournament by Virginia in penalty kicks after a 3-3 draw in regulation.

DEC. 7, 2013 — Beat Michigan State in the NCAA quarterfinals 2-1 to advance to the program's first College Cup.

DEC. 13, 2013 — Advanced to the national championship game with a 2-0 win over New Mexico. Sophomore midfielder Patrick Hodan scored two goals in the victory.

DEC. 15, 2013 — Claimed the first national championship in school history with a 2-1 win over Maryland. Seniors Leon Brown and Andrew O'Malley scored to lift the Irish to the title.

Seniors lead Irish to national championship



ZACH LLORENS | The Observer

Senior center back Andrew O'Malley, left, hoists the trophy after the Irish won the national title. O'Malley, a Philadelphia-area native, scored the game-winning goal in the 60th minute.

By VICKY JACOBSEN
Sports Writer

CHESTER, Pa. — For the friends and family of senior defender Andrew O'Malley, the only way the trip to see him play in Sunday's NCAA Championship Game could have been shorter was if the final were held in his backyard in West Chester, Pa.

But PPL Park in nearby Chester, Pa., the home of the Philadelphia Union, can accommodate many more well-wishers, and O'Malley said he tried to round up as many as possible for Sunday's game, a 2-1 victory over No. 5 Maryland that gave the No. 3 Irish their first ever national championship.

"I got as much of my family out [as I could]; I think they ran a tailgate, stuff like that," O'Malley said. "It was really good to get a goal in front of them. The goal itself was really put up on a silver platter for me; it would have been really tough to screw it up, I suppose."

Statistically speaking, O'Malley was an unexpected source of the championship-clinching goal. The senior captain had never scored a collegiate goal before this season, and had only scored two coming into the match Sunday afternoon.

But O'Malley said he was thankful that one of those precious scoring opportunities came while everyone was watching.

"I mean, to do that in front of people — I kind of jokingly said after the game, but I'm a little bit serious — people think I'm good now," O'Malley said. "So hopefully I'll just ride that confidence from other people."

O'Malley and senior forward Leon Brown, who scored Notre Dame's first goal of the game after

replacing junior forward Vince Ciciarelli in the 10th minute, put the Irish on the scoreboard, but they were far from the only members of the senior class who contributed something tangible to Sunday's win.

Goalkeeper Patrick Wall had three saves, including one four minutes before halftime that kept the Terrapins from taking a 2-1 lead into the break. Forward Harrison Shipp, who was named the Most Outstanding Offensive Player of the College Cup, took the free kick that O'Malley knocked into the back of the net. Brown's scoring play began with a throw-in from defender Luke Mishu, and defender Grant Van De Castele repeatedly saved the Irish from trouble with crucial clearances.

O'Malley said the seniors were motivated after sharing years of disappointment.

"We'd underachieved a lot as a team, and that hurts you more than anything," O'Malley said. "Not making the tournament sophomore year, freshman year, knocked out of the tournament in the first round, last year I was hurt and had to watch the team lose; it's some of the most painful experiences you'll ever have as a person."

"Senior leadership is so important to any team," Irish coach Bobby Clark said. "We work a lot on leadership, we work on that in the spring. Seniors set the tone ... Harry Shipp is a classic example of a kid that doesn't say much, but it's just who he is."

Clark said he had coached teams with arguably as much talent in the past, but none with the same type of chemistry.

"A lot of years I've had to coach, it's been harder work coaching than this year," Clark said. "It's

such a good group of kids this year. It wasn't hard work working with this group."

Shipp said much of the team's success was based on the decision to actively include all members of the team.

"I think this senior class was different from previous senior classes in that we really tried to not think of ourselves as bigger or better than all the other classes," Shipp said. "We tried to make it more equalized, and we started that last January and throughout the whole spring, summer, fall, I think we realized that if we wanted to make that next jump it was everyone together, all 30 guys on the team, not just the 11 that played or the 21 that dressed, it was all 30 guys, starting with the freshmen walk-ons and ending with me, Grant and O'Malley as captains. I think we showed that throughout the year and throughout the tournament."

Shipp and O'Malley agree that watching the women's soccer team win a title of their own in 2010, when the current seniors were freshmen, gave the men's team an idea of what they could strive for.

"Seeing [the women's team] win our freshman year, it almost makes you — I don't know if 'jealous' is the right word — but it makes you want to experience that same feeling," Shipp said. "I remember being in the dorms and everyone on campus was watching it, even if they didn't follow women's soccer throughout the whole year. I hope that people back on campus really followed us over the last five games, and especially here at the College Cup."

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Hand balls create controversy

By VICKY JACOBSEN
Sports Writer

CHESTER, Pa. — It's not very often that a player apologizes for scoring a goal. Then again, it's not very often two apparent hand balls are committed in the same scoring play — or that both violations to go unpunished.

But that seems to be what happened Sunday afternoon at PPL Park during the national championship game.

"That was definitely a crazy play," Maryland senior forward Patrick Mullins said. "A lot of things happened in a short period of time. From what I can remember, a cross came in, our player — I'm pretty sure [Alex] Shinsky — had a great shot. It did hit the kid's hand on the line, it bounced out, came back out and I made a mistake on my part. I'm very disappointed in myself for doing that, but in the heat of the moment, I hit it down my hand, and like any good forward, I put it in the net."

That goal put the No. 5 Terrapins (17-3-5, 7-1-3 ACC) ahead, 1-0, against No. 3 Notre Dame (17-1-6, 7-1-3). The Irish would go on to score twice more winning the title 2-1 and rendering the legitimacy of Mullins's final collegiate goal moot. But the Maryland star still said he was embarrassed by his action, which could have warranted a caution had the referees called the violation.

"It's definitely hard for me to swallow because I don't think that's the type of player I am," Mullins said. "Obviously the referee is a great referee, and I'm sure he'll look back unfortunately on that play, too, because it was just a lot of plays that I'm sure players and refs will want to take back. I will regret that one for the rest of my life, but I'll move forward. People make mistakes."

His coach was impressed by his public apology, and said that Mullins's public show of regret revealed the senior's strong character.

"When we build my stadium,

we're going to bronze a statue of him in the front because he's made of the best stuff on Earth," Maryland coach Sasho Cirovski said. "It affected him a lot after that moment. ... His conscience was hurting. He put too much on himself. There were many players that had intentional hand balls in the game. It'll be a learning lesson for him, but his character shining through is worthy of a championship."

Mullins was not the only one whose actions on that play were called into question. Replay clearly showed that Irish sophomore midfielder Patrick Hodan was standing in front of the goal when a shot bounced off his elbow, preventing a goal (although Mullins did score off the ricochet). If the officials believe that such a move is done purposefully with the intent of preventing a goal, the player can be shown a red card and ejected from the game.

Hodan acknowledged that the ball did touch his arm, but denied that he consciously moved his elbow to stop the shot.

"I guess a little bit," Hodan said when asked if he was surprised he was not shown a red card. "It was a nice header from the Maryland player, and it was just kind of a reaction. It wasn't anything deliberate. It was closer to the shoulder, I'd like to say, but they ended up scoring anyway so it wasn't too big of a deal."

Although Notre Dame coach Bobby Clark acknowledged he had not yet seen the play on video, he backed Hodan.

"I thought it was his shoulder," Clark said. "I knew our guys were annoyed at something else. They thought [Mullins] had brought the ball down with his hand and shot it. Maybe you say it was two hand balls, make it even."

"He didn't put his hand to the ball, so it wasn't like he did that. Chico [Grajeda] is a really good referee; these things happen."

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ZACH LLORENS | The Observer

Irish sophomore midfielder Patrick Hodan was involved in Maryland's controversial goal with what looked to be a hand ball.



ZACH LLORENS | The Observer

Notre Dame celebrates after winning the national championship Sunday at PPL Park in Chester, Pa. The Irish defeated Maryland, 2-1, to claim their first title in program history in their 37th season as a varsity program. Notre Dame finished the season 17-1-6.

FINALLY CHAMPIONS

For the first time in program history, Notre Dame won the national championship, defeating Maryland, 2-1, on Sunday at PPL Park in Chester, Pa. Senior forward Leon Brown netted an equalizer in the 40th minute and senior center back Andrew O'Malley scored the eventual game-winning goal in the 60th minute to give the Irish their first title in their 37th season as a varsity program.



GRANT TOBIN | The Observer

The No. 1 atop Grace Hall was lit up after Notre Dame defeated Maryland to win the national championship.



GRANT TOBIN | The Observer

Senior captain Harry Shipp, right, speaks to Irish fans at Heritage Hall after arriving back on campus.



ZACH LLORENS | The Observer

Senior forward Harry Shipp was named the Most Outstanding Offensive Player of the College Cup.



ZACH LLORENS | The Observer

Senior goalkeeper Patrick Wall blasts a goal kick during Notre Dame's 2-1 victory over Maryland on Sunday. Wall tallied two saves and improved his career record to 26-2-6.