

IRISH INSIDER

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2014

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THE OBSERVER

Photo Illustration by Zachary Llorens and Keri O'Mara

RECRUITING

DB Ykili Ross to take official visit to campus

By **MIKE MONACO**
Senior Sports Writer

After 35 days between home games — tied for the longest stretch in Notre Dame program history — the Irish will return to their home turf Saturday when they welcome Northwestern to Notre Dame Stadium. And with its first opportunity since mid-October to host recruits for a game weekend, Notre Dame will welcome class of 2015 four-star defensive back Ykili Ross for an official visit.

Ross, the No. 180 overall player in the country according to 247Sports' Composite Rankings, took an unofficial visit to South Bend in late June, per 247Sports. Irish recruiting analyst Tom Loy said Notre Dame is recruiting the multi-skilled Ross as a cornerback.

"You could make an argument that he's the top guy left on the board just for his versatility to play cornerback, safety, wide receiver," said Loy, who covers Notre Dame recruiting for Blue and Gold Illustrated, part of the 247Sports network. "He can play anywhere."

Irish defensive backs coach Kerry Cooks has been Ross's primary recruiter, according to Loy.

"It all makes sense," Loy said. "They want a long, athletic, fast corner. He's exactly that. He fits the bill. He's just a freak athlete that could be dominant on both sides of the ball."

Ross was initially scheduled to take his official visit next weekend when Notre Dame

squares off with Louisville, but the California native moved up his trip by one week.

"With him coming in a week early, he's going to get the red-carpet treatment," Loy said. "There's nobody else coming in this weekend that's gonna steal any attention from [Irish head coach Brian] Kelly, Cooks, [defensive coordinator Brian] VanGorder, anybody really. The whole staff's gonna give a push."

"So that's a big key for Notre Dame. They're very, very much in this."

Loy said he expects the decision to come down to Notre Dame versus USC.

Cornerbacks Shaun Crawford, Nick Coleman and Ashton White and safeties Prentice McKinney and Nicco Fertitta have also committed to the Irish for this recruiting cycle.

While Ross is the only scheduled weekend visitor, Notre Dame already has five recruits lined up for next weekend's senior day match-up with the Cardinals. Class of 2015 running back Ronald Jones II, an Oklahoma State commitment since April, is among those set to be in attendance. Jones checks in as the No. 9 running back and No. 84 overall player in the class of 2015. Loy said the Irish have liked Jones for a long time and described Jones's commitment to the Cowboys as "surprising."

"The combination of athletics and academics offered in South Bend was a big selling point, and Jones is a strong academic kid and he liked that about Notre Dame," Loy said.



Photo courtesy Blue & Gold Illustrated, 247Sports

Class of 2015 defensive back and receiver Ykili Ross is scheduled to take an official visit to campus this weekend, according to Irish recruiting analyst Tom Loy.

The Irish have continued to recruit Jones since his commitment, Loy added. Notre Dame still has a group of

running back targets on its board for the class of 2015. Loy said Soso Jamabo remains the top option, but Nick Brossette

(an LSU commitment), Jones and Dexter Williams (a Miami pledge expected to visit next weekend) are all in the mix as well.

"If they can get their hands on one of these top guys, that collection of running backs, that's a huge pull," Loy said.

The Irish offered class of 2016 cornerback Damar Hamlin on Tuesday. The No. 11 cornerback in his class, Hamlin also holds offers from the likes of Penn State, Ohio State and West Virginia.

"I love Damar Hamlin," Loy said. "He's long. He's only 6-feet tall, but he's got long arms. He reminds me a lot of [Irish freshman cornerback] Nick Watkins coming out of high school — above-average speed, really technically sound, just a polished cornerback compared to a lot of kids his age."

"... I think Notre Dame will be a player for Hamlin."

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



Photo courtesy Blue & Gold Illustrated, 247Sports

Class of 2015 running back Ronald Jones II, an Oklahoma State commitment since April, is expected to visit Notre Dame next weekend when the Irish host Louisville on Senior Day, according to Irish recruiting analyst Tom Loy.

Contact Mike Monaco at jmonaco@nd.edu

"IF YOU HAVE A GIFT, YOU SHOULD SHARE IT."

By ISAAC LORTON
Assistant Managing Editor

Whatever may change on the field, Matthias Farley remains the same.

"Sweet beard pic," Farley said as he wrapped up his photo shoot Wednesday.

Farley's facial follicles are a talent of his, he noted.

"Every time I have had a beard since I started playing football, I have played better than if I shave my face, historically," Farley said.

The easy-going, self-assured Charlotte, North Carolina native said it is this nature that allows him to weather the chaos of Notre Dame football.

"I have been the exact same way since I've got here," Farley said.

"When you're going through change, if you're grounded and find out who you

are as a person outside of football — because there's so many things that can change on a whim in this game — you can't be serious all of the time. So I think it has helped me because I like to goof around and have a good time. Just keeping that in mind and understanding that there's a lot of things at stake in the game of football [is important], but just remembering to enjoy it and understand it's a blessing to be able to play it period, especially to be able to play it here, [is also important]"

Farley has played four different positions in an Irish uniform and started at three of them. As a freshman, Farley was on the practice squad as a redshirt receiver who often

watched away games from his dorm, Carroll Hall. As a sophomore, Farley was asked to play safety, and shortly thereafter, he was thrown into a starting role after injuries to former Irish safety Jamoris Slaughter and graduate student safety Austin

Farley said he placed these lofty expectations on himself as well, but such thoughts were hindrances at times.

"I think I had to grow up a lot," Farley said of his play last season. "When you get put in a situation where you do well and then you come back and things are expected of you and you don't do as well or don't live up to it, it's easy to take it hard on yourself and harp on things that you should probably let go."

As a senior, Farley was asked to play the nickelback corner position under new defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder. The position was much more complex compared to the nickel corner in former defensive coordinator Bob Diaco's system, and after watching a lot of film, VanGorder asked Farley to take on that role. Used to changing positions, Farley said he took it all in stride.

"I saw it as a way to start over," Farley said of his position change. "It's a new coordinator, a new system. It's kind of been the story of my career: starting over. I had no reservations about when he said he wanted to move me. I was on board 100 percent."

Farley said he was much more prepared for his senior year because he put his time at Notre Dame into perspective. His even-keeled demeanor has contributed to his play this season, which has included 32 tackles, 3.5 sacks, 6.5 tackles-for-loss and three interceptions.

"I came in [this season] with a different mindset that I was just going to enjoy this because there's somebody somewhere — probably thousands of people — who would trade with me in a day - and trade with any of us, not just myself. It goes so fast. ... I feel like I just got here. So really I just enjoy every day, give my all every day and try to encourage everybody else around me."

It is through all of his trials

and experiences that Farley has become a calming source and advisor for his young teammates and new starters on the Irish defense, he said.

"I feel like I have gone through a lot of things that they have gone through," Farley said. "My sophomore year, I got thrown in due to an injury, and last year, I had a lot of ups and downs. So having gone through that, and seeing guys when they get done, it's really easy for me to pick up on it because I was right there really not too long ago at all."

Farley remains rooted in and inspired by the lessons his family has taught him, he said. His memories cover his left arm, chest and back in the form of tattoos. On his bicep, his very first tattoo, which reads "Farley Sempre," or "Farley Forever," surrounded by the outline of North Carolina reminds him of his family and home. The number "7" on his elbow represents his seven siblings. Coming off the "7," a staircase climbs into the clouds of heaven in remembrance of his deceased brother, Titus. The poem, "Invictus," on his back tells him he "is the master of [his] fate" and the "captain of [his] soul," while the large Icarus on his shoulder reminds him to be humble and grounded, he said. These images map out how Farley became who he is as a person, he said.

"I think tattoos are the story of my life on my arm," Farley said. "And it's a constant reminder of people and things that have had huge impacts on my life. Just in a visual form ... it is a great reminder to pull me back to home base of what I have gone through, where I have been and where I want to go, and the people who have helped me get there."

The tattoos add to Farley's unique style, something about which his teammates make frequent comments.

"I think it's kind of comical

because I wear the same things every day," Farley said. "Every once in a while, I throw a curveball and wear some cowboy boots."

"There's not too much variety. I just own it. I just rock it."

With his style comes his music. Farley has a great affinity for music, one he has been trying to express by learning the ukulele from sophomore receiver Corey Robinson.

"I love music," Farley said. "I don't think the world should exist if there wasn't music in it. I have never been musically gifted — I am not very good at the ukulele — but I really enjoy playing. I think music is applicable to anything and everything in life, whether it is good or bad."

Learning the ukulele has not been as easy as changing a position, Farley said.

"It's honestly a frustration because Corey Robinson is still so much better at it than me," Farley said. "I always wanted to play an instrument. I joke around all the time and say I'm really good at the kazoo, which I actually am, but that doesn't take too much talent. It's been cool to learn something new, pick something up."

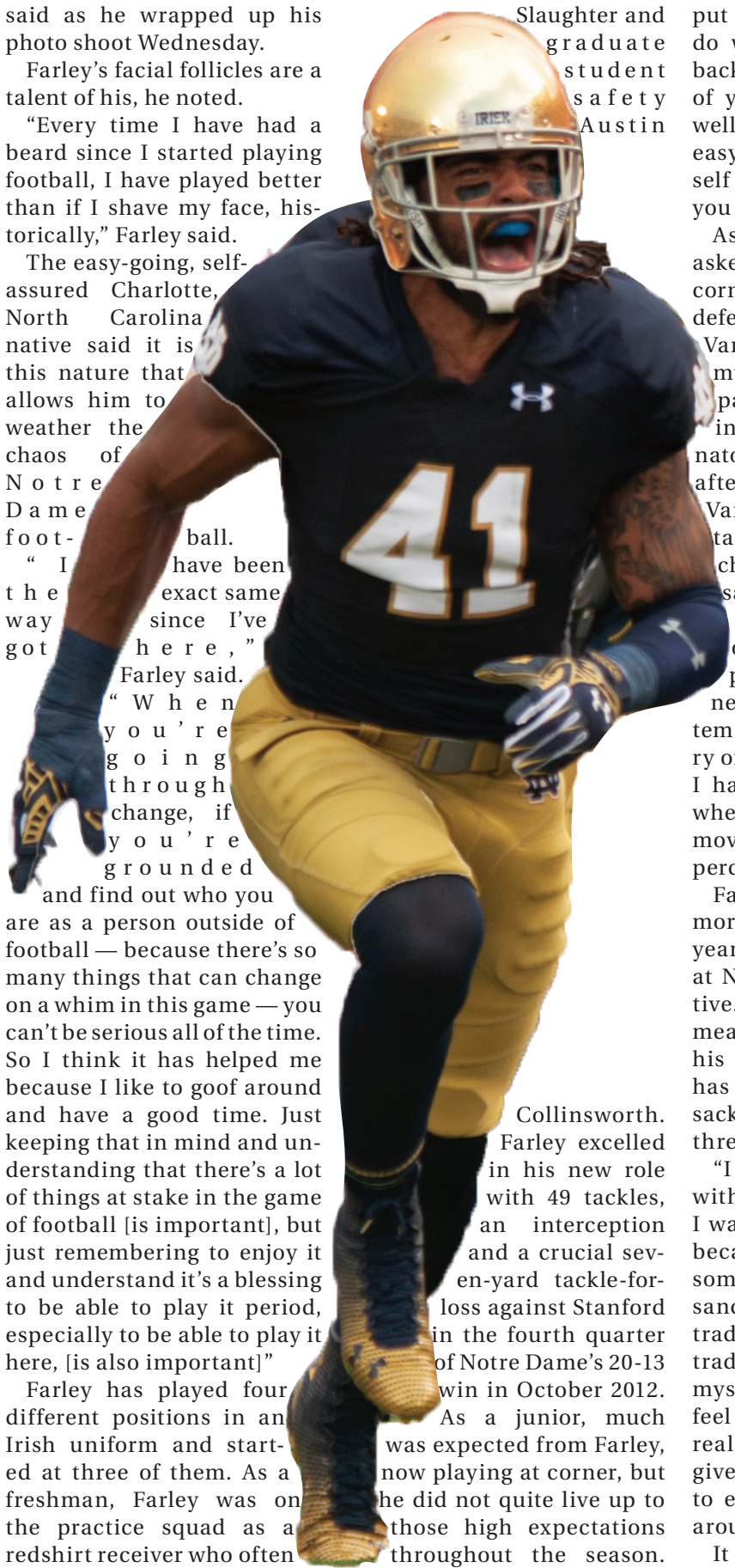
Music connects to all things, even football, Farley said.

"When you're playing a game like football, [music] definitely adds to it, even if it is just a pregame soundtrack," Farley said. "If you hear it every time before you go out, it kind of gets your mind set right, adds consistency."

The consistency and uniqueness that define Farley as a person have shown up on the field this season, as he has consistently made the big play when most needed. Farley summed up his personality and play in his description of his beard.

"If you have a gift, you should share it."

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COMMENTARY

Strong bowl options still await ND after ASU loss



Samantha Zuba

Assistant Managing Editor

I know what you're thinking, Irish fans.

Last weekend was great. With no Notre Dame games, there was more time to huddle inside and enjoy other college football games on television.

Weird to have two bye weeks in a three-week stretch, but hey, roll with it. Now, Notre Dame should be ready to keep charging against Northwestern on Saturday. The Navy game wasn't the prettiest, but the Irish have had plenty of time to rest and recover before continuing the College Football Playoff quest. What well-timed

bye weeks.

Sorry, what? Notre Dame played last week? The first half was an abyss of misery as the Irish lost to Arizona State, 55-31? Are you sure?

I am sure, Irish fans.

That loss was a slap to the Irish, and as hard as it might be for fans to take, this Saturday marks the first game since Notre Dame's playoff hopes ended.

The Sun Devils launched themselves from No. 9 to No. 6 in the College Football Playoff rankings with the win over the Irish. They're solidly positioned for a shot at the playoffs with a large helping of football still left.

That could have been Notre

Dame. Instead, the Irish dropped to No. 18 in the playoff committee's rankings, and there's virtually no way back to playoff contention.

There are positives, though, I promise. Maybe seniors who wanted to witness another national championship game won't see a lot of sunshine in

Notre Dame to play in the Russell Athletic Bowl against Oklahoma. Two dynamic offenses and the potential for the Irish to get payback for last season's 35-21 loss? This could be good.

CBS Sports put the Irish in the Belk Bowl against LSU. A big game against an SEC team

for a few more years. The Irish proved they could play one of the country's best teams — not just top 10, but top two — and excel.

If this season becomes a stepping-stone to a future playoff appearance, maybe the phrase "offensive pass interference" will stop driving barbs into Irish fans' hearts. Or at least barbs not dipped in acid.

For now, Notre Dame fans have to deal with this current season. To write it off would be disrespectful to this year's team, what it has accomplished and what remains for it to do.

The Irish will continue forming their bowl resume Saturday against Northwestern, then on to a home matchup with a tricky Louisville team and a journey to Los Angeles to take on a Jekyll-and-Hyde USC team hovering on the edges of the polls.

Sorry, what? Notre Dame came back from a 34-3 deficit against Arizona State but didn't finish the job?

Irish fans, I have no comforting words about that.

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

Contact Samantha Zuba at szuba@nd.edu

If this season becomes a stepping-stone to a future playoff appearance, maybe the phrase "offensive pass interference" will stop driving barbs into Irish fans' hearts. Or at least barbs not dipped in acid.

the possibilities, but Notre Dame is still a top-20 team. This isn't a 9-4 team with a loss to Pittsburgh.

The Rose Bowl and Sugar Bowl are out, as these will serve as the two semifinal games in the playoffs. The Cotton, Fiesta and Peach Bowls are long shots with so many teams ahead of the Irish, as is the Orange Bowl, although the Irish have a tie-in there.

Even if Notre Dame misses one of these major bowls, the Irish could play their way into an intriguing matchup.

Sports Illustrated and ESPN each recently projected

would provide an electric atmosphere and a quality test for Notre Dame.

Because remember, this team is still being tested. Although the Irish are no longer being measured under the pressure of playoff aspirations, this team has a lot of potential. This season still matters because Notre Dame does have a shot at a pretty good bowl game and because there is a lot of player development left to do.

This season's team has outperformed the expectations of many. Underclassmen impressed, and they'll be here

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ZACHARY LLORENS | The Observer

Irish senior quarterback Everett Golson scrambles during Notre Dame's 50-43 win over North Carolina on Oct. 11 at Notre Dame Stadium.



JODI LO | The Observer



JODI LO | The Observer

WILDCATS PASSING

Senior quarterback Trevor Siemian has appeared in 42 games for the Wildcats, splitting time with Kain Colter in the last two seasons before taking over the job this year. Siemian's statistics have dropped off slightly from last season; he has completed 57 percent of his passes and thrown five touchdowns to eight interceptions. Siemian is coming off his best performance of the season, in which he threw for 273 yards and completed over 65 percent of his passes in a 10-9 loss to Michigan.

Northwestern has had only one 100-plus yard receiving performance on the season. Junior superback Dan Vitale, a halfback/tight end hybrid, eclipsed the mark against Penn State. Senior Kyle Prater has been Northwestern's most consistent receiver with 372 yards on the season. The Wildcats' offensive line has struggled to protect Siemian, allowing 28 sacks through nine games.

Although Notre Dame's secondary held Arizona State under its passing yards average, the Irish allowed several big-yardage plays. Still, it's difficult to imagine Northwestern's passing attack being able to exploit the Irish secondary, especially if graduate student cornerback Cody Riggs is back. Notre Dame's defensive line also should be able to successfully pressure Siemian into some tough throws.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

WILDCATS RUSHING

Northwestern's rush attack has struggled to get going this season. The Wildcats rank 111th in the country with an average of 109 rushing yards per game. In addition, the Wildcats average only 2.9 rush yards per attempt.

There have been positive signs for the Wildcats recently, however, as freshman Justin Jackson has emerged to take the bulk of carries. Jackson has topped the 100-yard mark in three of his last five games, including a 162-yard effort against Wisconsin and a 128-yard performance against Nebraska.

Notre Dame's run defense has dropped off in recent weeks, allowing 360 yards to Navy and 188 to Arizona State. But the Irish rush defense has been strong when it has needed to be, allowing only 50 yards to Florida State and 47 to Stanford. Even if juniors Sheldon Day and Jarron Jones are not fully healed from various injuries suffered over the last few weeks, the Irish should be able to stop an

underwhelming Northwestern ground game.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

WILDCATS OFFENSIVE COACHING

Northwestern offensive coordinator Mick McCall is in his seventh season and has had some good offenses, particularly the one that averaged over 31 points two seasons ago. Those offenses, however, came with all-conference quarterbacks in Colter and Dan Persa and a talented running back in Venric Mark.

McCall's offense has looked much less stellar this year, ranking 119th in the nation in scoring. The Wildcats have scored 20 or more points in only four games this season.

Irish defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder's defense has allowed more than 30 points in the last four games. Regardless, his aggressive defense should be able to exploit Northwestern's struggles in pass blocking and establishing a consistent run game.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

WILDCATS SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore kicker Jack Mitchell has connected on eight of his 10 field-goal attempts this season, and the two kicks he missed were his only attempts over 30 yards.

The Wildcats have struggled with punting, ranking 119th nationally with a net average of 32 yards. Northwestern's kickoff return unit ranks 91st nationally, but its punt return unit has averaged over 12 yards per return.

Notre Dame's recent struggles haven't hit the punt and kickoff return units, which both rank in the top half of teams nationally.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

WILDCATS SCHEDULE (3-6)

- Aug. 30
- Sept. 6
- Sept. 20
- Sept. 27
- Oct. 4
- Oct. 11
- Oct. 18
- Nov. 1
- Nov. 8
- Nov. 15
- Nov. 22
- Nov. 29
- California (L 31-24)
- Northern Illinois (L 23-15)
- Western Illinois (W 24-7)
- @ Penn State (W 29-6)
- Wisconsin (W 20-14)
- @ Minnesota (L 24-17)
- Nebraska (L 38-17)
- @ Iowa (L 48-7)
- Michigan (L 10-9)
- @ Notre Dame
- @ Purdue
- Illinois



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A week after the so-called “debacle in the desert,” Notre Dame has a chance to spit out the bitter taste left in its mouth from the loss to Arizona State.

Expect Everett Golson to bounce back with a clean — if not necessarily spectacular — performance. The Irish will move the ball without much trouble against the Northwestern defense.

On the other side, the Wildcats must find a way to sustain drives against Brian VanGorder's defense. Northwestern quarterback Trevor Siemian found success in the Wildcats' last two drives Saturday against Michigan, but Siemian won't strike much fear in the eyes of the Irish defense, even with freshman middle linebacker Nyles Morgan. The Irish will get back on track in a big way.

FINAL SCORE: Notre Dame 41, Northwestern 17

After last Saturday's barrage of turnovers, a game against Northwestern might be the remedy Notre Dame needs. Well, partially, at least.

Despite its 3-6 record, Northwestern's defense hasn't been too bad overall — the Wildcats actually rank 30th nationally in scoring defense. On the other hand, Northwestern's offense has been dreadful, particularly recently. The Wildcats haven't scored more than 20 points since September.

That statistic spells good news for the Notre Dame defense, which has been under siege recently. The Irish should be able to push through Northwestern's offensive line and get to Trevor Siemian often.

That should give Notre Dame enough of a cushion to come out with a comfortable win, even if Everett Golson makes a mistake or two.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 35, Northwestern 14

Turnovers, whoever's fault they may be, have dogged the Irish this season, and they did again last Saturday.

Northwestern doesn't have the pass rush or powerful defense line to create a frenzy like Arizona State did, so Notre Dame should have a better chance to hang onto the ball.

Northwestern will be aggressive, as head coach Pat Fitzgerald proved last week with his adventurous two-point conversion call, but the Wildcats' offense has been largely anemic.

Look for Notre Dame's defense to shut down Northwestern quarterback Trevor Siemian.

Everett Golson and the Irish should be able to out-score Northwestern by a large margin.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 42, Northwestern 10

HEAD T

3:30 P.M.

NOTRE DAME STADIUM

NORTHWESTERN



(Jr.) Cameron Dickerson 19 WR
(Jr.) Pierre Youngblood-Ary 11

(Jr.) Dan Vitale 40 TE/HB
(R-Fr.) Jayme Taylor 88

(Sr.) Paul Jorgensen 78 LT
(Jr.) Shane Mertz 70

(Fr.) Justin Jackson 28 RB
(Sr.) Treyvon Green 22

(Jr.) Geoff Mogus 53 LG
(So.) Ian Park 63

(Sr.) Trevor Siemian 13 QB
(Jr.) Zack Oliver 10

(Sr.) Brandon Vitabile 66 C
(Sr.) Hayden Baker 65

(Jr.) Matt Frazier 57 RG
(So.) Adam DePietro 73

(Sr.) Jack Konopka 75 RT
(So.) Eric Olson 76

(Sr.) Kyle Prater 21 WR
(So.) Mike McHugh 83

(Sr.) Tony Jones 6 WR
(So.) Austin Carr 80

(Jr.) Nick VanHoose 23 LCB
(Jr.) Jarrell Williams 4

(Sr.) Chi Chi Ariguzo 44 WLB
(Jr.) Drew Smith 55

(Sr.) Ibraheim Campbell 24 S
(R-Fr.) Godwin Igwebuike 16

(Jr.) Deonte Gibson 13 DE
(So.) Ifeadi Odenigbo 7

(R-Fr.) Anthony Walker 18 MLB
(So.) Jaylen Prater 51

(Jr.) Max Chapman 96 DT
(So.) Greg Kuhar 93

(Jr.) C.J. Robbins 90 DT
(So.) Connor Mahoney 89

(Jr.) Traveon Henry 10 S
(R-Fr.) Kyle Queiro 21

(Jr.) Dean Lowry 94 DE
(Fr.) Xavier Washington 98

(Jr.) Drew Smith 55 SLB
(Sr.) Jimmy Hall 9

(So.) Matthew Harris 27 RCB
(R-Fr.) Marcus McShepard 17

(So.) Jack Mitchell 8 PK
(So.) Christian Salem 18 H

(So.) Chris Gradone 31 P
(R-Fr.) Hunter Niswander 32

(Sr.) Treyvon Green 22 KR

(Sr.) Tony Jones 6 PR
(So.) Chris Fitzpatrick 52 LS

0 HEAD

ON NBC

NO. 18 NOTRE DAME



KARLA MORENO | The Observer



KARLA MORENO | The Observer



CB **2** **Cody Riggs** (Gr.)
19 Nick Watkins (Fr.)

WLB **9** **Jaylon Smith** (So.)
48 Greer Martini (Fr.)

DE **45** **Romeo Okwara** (Jr.)
98 Andrew Trumbetti (Fr.)

S **22** **Elijah Shumate** (Jr.)
23 Drue Tranquill (Fr.)

DT **91** **Sheldon Day** (Jr.)
53 Justin Utupo (Gr.)

ILB **5** **Nyles Morgan** (Fr.)
42 Michael Deeb (So.)

DT **94** **Jarron Jones** (Jr.)
75 Daniel Cage (Fr.)

S **10** **Max Redfield** (So.)
41 Matthias Farley (Sr.)

DE **90** **Isaac Rochell** (So.)
92 Grant Blankenship (Fr.)

SLB **17** **James Onwualu** (So.)
31 John Turner (Jr.)

CB **36** **Cole Luke** (So.)
12 Devin Butler (So.)

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

WR **3** **Amir Carlisle** (Sr.)
20 C.J. Prosise (Jr.)

RT **74** **Christian Lombard** (Gr.)
68 Mike McGlinchey (So.)

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

C **77** **Matt Hegarty** (Sr.)
75 Mark Harrell (Jr.)

LG **72** **Nick Martin** (Sr.)
65 Conor Hanratty (Sr.)

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

TE **18** **Ben Koyack** (Sr.)
80 Durham Smythe (So.)
13 Tyler Luatua (Fr.)

WR **7** **Will Fuller** (So.)
16 Torii Hunter Jr. (So.)

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

KR **3** **Amir Carlisle** (Sr.)
33 Cam McDaniel (Sr.)

LS **61** **Scott Daly** (Jr.)

PK **27** **Kyle Brindza** (Sr.)
85 Tyler Newsome (Fr.)

P **27** **Kyle Brindza** (Sr.)
85 Tyler Newsome (Fr.)

PR **2** **Cody Riggs** (Gr.)
1 Greg Bryant (So.)



IRISH PASSING

Much attention has been focused on Irish senior quarterback Everett Golson after his five-turnover performance Saturday. Golson certainly had his struggles — and his six fumbles are cause for concern — but Saturday's performance was far from solely his fault, as his offensive line failed to block, his receivers bobbled passes, and players were out of position.

Golson still managed to throw for a career-high 446 yards and two touchdowns against Arizona State, one week after he accounted for six touchdowns versus Navy. Sophomore receiver Will Fuller and senior receiver Amir Carlisle each had more than 90 yards against the Sun Devils.

Unfortunately for Golson, he'll face a defense that has successfully forced turnovers. The Wildcats have intercepted 11 passes, good for 20th in the nation. Redshirt freshman cornerback Godwin Igwebuike leads the Northwestern secondary with three of these interceptions.

While it would be unlikely for Golson to replicate last Saturday's performance, an aggressive, poised Northwestern secondary might not exactly be the remedy for him to get back to the level of some of his earlier performances.

EDGE: NORTHWESTERN

IRISH RUSHING

After three consecutive strong efforts, including back-to-back games of more than 120 yards, Irish sophomore running back Tarean Folston struggled to find a rhythm against Arizona State, running for only 30 yards on 11 carries. Notre Dame had only 41 yards in the game.

The Irish have made improvements over the last month but have struggled to find consistent running lanes and currently rank 74th nationally in rushing offense. Although Folston has received the lion's share of carries, Irish head coach Brian Kelly might play McDaniel more because he has had more success in pass blocking.

Northwestern's rush defense has had its share of struggles recently, allowing nine touchdowns on the game in its last three games. In total, the Wildcats have allowed about 164 yards on the ground per game.

Given Notre Dame's track record, there's no guarantee the Irish will be able to run it consistently.

EDGE: EVEN

IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING

Under the direction of Kelly and offensive coordinator Mike Denbrock, Notre Dame has put up nearly 35 points per game, the highest scoring average in the Kelly era. The Irish have accrued more than 400 yards in three of their last four games and still scored 27 points in the game they didn't.

Under sixth-year defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz, Northwestern has allowed slightly more than 22 points per game. But the Wildcats have struggled lately, giving up more than 35 points in two of their last three games.

EDGE: NOTRE DAME

IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS

After its success to start the season, Notre Dame's special teams unit has shown some regression to its level of play over the last few seasons.

Senior kicker Kyle Brindza has missed three field goals over the last two games, though he's not fully to blame — junior holder Hunter Smith, who has since been replaced by sophomore quarterback Malik Zaire, mishandled a snap last weekend.

Northwestern excels in blocking field goals, ranking second nationally with five blocks on the season.

EDGE: NORTHWESTERN

IRISH SCHEDULE (7-2)

Aug. 30 **Rice (W 48-17)**
Sept. 6 **Michigan (W 31-0)**
Sept. 13 **vs. Purdue (W 30-14)**
Sept. 27 **Syracuse (W 31-15)**
Oct. 4 **Stanford (W 17-14)**
Oct. 11 **North Carolina (W 50-43)**
Oct. 18 **@ Florida State (L 34-31)**
Nov. 1 **vs. Navy (W 49-39)**
Nov. 8 **@ Arizona State (L 55-31)**
Nov. 15 **Northwestern**
Nov. 22 **Louisville**
Nov. 29 **@ USC**



Isaac Lorton
Assistant Managing Editor



Mary Green
Sports Editor

The Irish may not have a shot at the playoffs, but they still have a lot to improve upon, beginning with Northwestern.

The Wildcats are in the top 20 for takeaways in college football with 17 total, which means Everett Golson cannot think his job of taking care of the ball will be any easier. Yes, Golson will move the ball against a porous Northwestern defense; however, as seen last week, total yardage does not matter at the end of the game.

The Irish offensive line will need to drastically improve, defense will need to tighten up and special teams will need to be more consistent. Although the Wildcats are struggling, Notre Dame needs to prove it that it will not play to its opponent's level in order to start to regain its credibility.

The Irish will do just that.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 48, Northwestern 20

Notre Dame's hopes for a national championship may have been dashed after last week's loss, but the team will still look to finish the season on a high note.

Everett Golson took much of the blame for last Saturday's performance, which included five turnovers. With that mentality, Golson will rebound this week and let it fly against the nation's 43rd-ranked passing defense. The Wildcats won't have any better luck stopping a surging Tarean Folston, whose 99.7 yards over the past three games stack up well against the 164 rushing yards Northwestern gives up each week on average.

The Irish defense — which did a solid job Saturday despite Arizona State's 55 points — won't yield enough points this week for Northwestern to overcome Notre Dame's offensive firepower.

FINAL SCORE : Notre Dame 38, Northwestern 17

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Northwestern looks to revitalize its offense

By **BRIAN HARTNETT**
Managing Editor

Northwestern's 10-9 home loss to Michigan last Saturday marked the team's fourth consecutive defeat.

It marked the fifth consecutive game in which the Wildcats (3-6, 2-4 Big Ten) scored 20 or fewer points.

And it ended with Northwestern just yards short of victory, as senior quarterback Trevor Siemian slipped and fell down as he attempted a two-point conversion after the Wildcats scored a touchdown to close within one point of the Wolverines.

Still, Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald saw the close loss as a notable improvement for his team.

"Our guys are coming back; they're fighting," Fitzgerald said during the Big Ten Football Coaches Teleconference on Tuesday. "I'm really proud of the way they fought [Saturday]."

"We don't need to worry about winning out; we need to worry about winning next week."

Pat Fitzgerald
Northwestern head coach

... We just came up three yards short."

Last Saturday's game followed a 48-7 Wildcats loss to Iowa on Nov. 1 and a 38-17 defeat against Nebraska on Oct. 18.

Siemian threw for 273 yards, his single-game season high, and completed over 65 percent of his passes in the game.

Fitzgerald said he was particularly encouraged by Siemian's 143 passing yards in the fourth quarter.

"It looked like our whole [offensive] line gave Trevor more than a nanosecond to throw the ball, so that was productive," he said after Saturday's game. "Looks like we caught it pretty well, a big catch by [junior receiver Cameron Dickerson] to get things moving and obviously the great touchdown catch by [senior receiver Tony Jones] and a bunch in between."

Despite Siemian's improved efficiency, the Wildcats, who possess the nation's 119th-ranked scoring offense, struggled to move the ball, as freshman running back Justin Jackson ran for 35 yards on 17 carries.

Jackson had run for more than 100 yards in three of his four previous games, putting together a 162-yard effort in Northwestern's victory over Wisconsin on Oct. 4 and a 128-yard, two-touchdown performance in the loss to the Cornhuskers.

Fitzgerald said the team's next few games would provide a good opportunity for Jackson to bounce back and continue to improve.

"At the end of the day, freshman year is a grind," Fitzgerald said Tuesday. "... This is where you rely upon and I think where you learn the most as a young player. You've got to dig down deep. You've got to rely upon and trust yourself, but rely upon the way you practice each week and find one more play. [Jackson] came back and had a really good practice today."

Fitzgerald added that most of Northwestern's inability to run Saturday resulted from offensive line breakdowns. The Wildcats have surrendered 28 sacks through nine games thus far, including five sacks Saturday.

"We played poorly up front," he said Tuesday. "I think it had a lot less to do with Justin and a lot more to do with the way that we targeted. We were out-physicaled, and we did not finish blocks."

Although Northwestern has struggled to find its offensive rhythm, the Wildcats have been

scheme," Kelly said of Northwestern. "... They're never really out of position. I think they're well coached, fundamentally sound, and they do a really good job of attacking the football."

"Their guys on the back end, their corners and safeties, have very good ball skills."

With a matchup against No. 15 Notre Dame looming this

Saturday, Fitzgerald said his team's focus is on the short-term, not the potential postseason goals.

"We don't need to worry about winning out; we need to worry about winning next week," Fitzgerald said last Saturday. "We've got a group of seniors that we want to get in the postseason, and you know, if you focus on that, you're not

going to focus on the preparation. It's not about the outcome; it's about getting yourself to go out and do it. So hopefully we will."

Notre Dame and Northwestern will meet Saturday at 3:30 p.m. at Notre Dame Stadium.

Contact **Brian Hartnett** at bhartnet@nd.edu

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Offensive line remains optimistic after loss



Irish senior guard Nick Martin blocks during Notre Dame's season-opening 48-17 win over Rice on Aug. 30.

By **MARY GREEN**
Sports Editor

As Notre Dame looks to rebound from last week's loss with a win against Northwestern, much of the attention will be focused on the Irish offensive line's ability to protect senior quarterback Everett Golson.

Golson had a hand in a large portion of Notre Dame's offensive miscues Saturday against Arizona State, including five turnovers off four interceptions and one lost fumble.

Senior captain and offensive lineman Nick Martin said his job description includes keeping his signal caller's confidence high.

"We obviously reassure him every practice, and we know if we protect him, he's going to make big plays," Martin said. "That's what he's been doing all year, and there's no doubt about

that we want No. 5 behind us."

The offensive line has undergone a fair share of transitions throughout the season.

After the first three games saw Golson sacked six times for 42 total yards lost and the rushing attack pick up only 158 yards per game, the identity of the line was shaken up during Notre Dame's first bye week, between the Purdue and Syracuse matchups.

In the season opener against Rice on Aug. 30, the line featured junior Ronnie Stanley at left tackle, senior Conor Hanratty at left guard, Martin at center, graduate student Christian Lombard at right guard and sophomore Steve Elmer at right tackle.

Against Arizona State last week, Stanley was the only player who did not change positions.

The rest of the line read Martin at left guard, senior

Matt Hegarty at center, Elmer at right guard and Lombard at left tackle.

Martin said the unit's job remains the same no matter where or against which team he and his teammates play.

"You've just got to lock down your guy," he said. "You only have to block one guy on each play. You only have one man to block."

Even with the new look, the line has struggled. Last week, the blitz-heavy Sun Devils sacked Golson seven times for a total 64-yard loss.

Irish head coach Brian Kelly said he was reluctant to put the full blame on the line for that stat.

"We could probably have an hour-long conversation about this — it's not about simply the offensive line's inability to pick up the blitz," Kelly said Tuesday. "This is all synced into, the ball has to come out of your hand on time when they bring the pressure. ... So it's not just on an offensive line's inability to pick up pressure. There is more to it than that, so that's why we're not pressing the alarm button on our offensive line in this instance. There are so many factors that have to get better across the board."

However, Kelly did note the offensive line as a unit shared responsibility for early Notre Dame errors, such as Golson's fumble in the first quarter, which came on a 13-yards-lost sack and resulted in an Arizona State touchdown.

"Well, interesting enough, we're in max protection on the first turnover, and we have more blockers than they have blitzers, and we have two guys that get whipped, flat out get whipped," he said. "[Golson] doesn't expect to have any pressure on that play."

"The next play, it's one of those plays where we're trying to get the hands down of a defensive end, and we whiff on a block. I could go over every one of them."

Despite those sacks, defensive pressure and turnovers, Martin said he and his linemates were as prepared as they could have been.

"I think the biggest thing is, they didn't throw anything at us we weren't ready for," he said. "We knew what they were going to give us, and that's what they did. You've just got to stay in front of your man, and it goes back to, you've only got one man to block each play."

Trying to come off that performance, Martin said the line is eager to take the field against Northwestern on Saturday.

"We have a chip on our shoulder," he said. "We want to play next week, and sometimes it's tough, having a game, and you have to wait a whole week to play again, and we just want to get out there and play the game."

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Golson, Irish aim to improve ball security

By MIKE MONACO

Senior Sports Writer

Editor's Note: A version of this story first ran in The Observer on Wednesday.

Five Everett Golson turnovers spiraled into 28 Arizona State points Saturday, but Irish head coach Brian Kelly said the senior quarterback isn't entirely to blame for the miscues and the resulting 55-31 loss to the Sun Devils.

"He's responsible for the football. Every one of those turnovers, he's responsible for because he's the leader," Kelly said Tuesday. "And he took full responsibility and that's why I'm proud of him. But he's got 10 other players that have to do their job. And they've got to do their job better."

Golson tossed four interceptions and fumbled twice, losing the ball once. The Sun Devils returned two interceptions for touchdowns and had two scoring drives — that followed Golson turnovers — that lasted a combined four plays and 36 yards. And although Golson was under constant pressure from the blitz-happy Sun Devils, which notched seven sacks, Kelly said the offensive line wasn't "central to the issues of turnovers." The line wasn't to blame for any of the first three turnovers, Kelly said, and the coaching staff isn't "pressing the alarm button" on the offensive line.

"Those had nothing to do with the offensive line," Kelly said. "When we look at it, it's easy to say, 'Alright, it's the offensive line that's breaking down.' We don't see that. ... It's not pointing to one specific group."

Irish senior running back Cam McDaniel will continue to get more playing time in pass-protection situations as he continues to stay a cut above sophomore running backs Tarean Folston and Greg Bryant as a blocker, Kelly said. Folston and Bryant can improve their "want-to" and technique as blockers, Kelly added.

A New Holder

Irish sophomore quarterback Malik Zaire will take over duties as the starting holder, Kelly said. Zaire replaces junior walk-on Hunter Smith, who has mishandled three snaps — two against Stanford in poor weather conditions and one in the warm sunshine against Arizona State — this season. The mishap Saturday occurred with Notre Dame trailing 34-17 at the start of the fourth quarter.

"We've had three drops. Three is too many. Can't take a fourth," Kelly said.

Zaire has served as the back-up holder all season, per Kelly.

What Lies Ahead

After Notre Dame suffered its second loss of the season and dropped to 7-2 — effectively

eliminating itself from College Football Playoff contention — Kelly said his message to the team hasn't change much.

"We haven't talked about playoffs since day one," Kelly said. "All we really talked about was how we compete and what we need to do this weekend to win because we're all in it to win it. So our focus is really about what do we need to do to win this weekend because they want to sing the fight song at the end of the day."

The Irish sat at No. 10 in last week's College Football Playoff rankings and fell to No. 18 in the latest batch of rankings released Tuesday evening. Notre Dame dropped to No. 15 in this week's AP poll and No. 16 in the coaches' poll.

"We weren't going to be able to control even if we won out whether we were gonna go to



KARLA MORENO | The Observer

Irish senior quarterback Everett Golson committed five turnovers in Notre Dame's 55-31 loss to Arizona State on Saturday. Golson now has 17 turnovers in his last six games.

the playoffs," Kelly said. "So we focus on things we can control. And what we know we can control is what we do during the

week. And that's really been the message."

The Irish host Northwestern on Saturday at 3:30 p.m. at Notre

Dame Stadium.

Contact Mike Monaco at jmonaco@nd.edu

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Matthew Wilkens

Assistant Professor, Department of English

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**What's All the Fuss about Digital
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Matt Wilkens, Assistant Professor, Department
of English

11.22.14 (vs. Louisville)
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