

Clausen named an O'Brien Award semifinalist

By Keith Arnold

The 15 semifinalists for the Davey O'Brien National Quarterback Award has been announced. Not surprisingly, Jimmy Clausen made the cut:

Here is the complete list of the 15 semifinalists:

Matt Barkley, USC
Daryll Clark, Penn State
Jimmy Clausen, Notre Dame
Jacory Harris, Miami
Case Keenum, Houston
Dan LeFevour, Central Michigan
Jake Locker, Washington
Colt McCoy, Texas
Kellen Moore, Boise State
Tony Pike, Cincinnati
Todd Reesing, Kansas
Zac Robinson, Oklahoma State
Ricky Stanzi, Iowa
Bill Stull, Pittsburgh
Tim Tebow, Florida



"We are proud to recognize this group of young men for their performances on and off the field," Danielle Moorman, executive director of the Davey O'Brien Foundation said. "The commitment, sportsmanship and leadership qualities exemplified by these quarterbacks truly embody the spirit of The O'Brien."

You've got to think Clausen will be in the running for this award all the way until the end.

Tate named a Biletnikoff Award semifinalist

By Keith Arnold

There is more awards news coming today, as Jimmy Clausen isn't the only Irish offensive star to be named to a semifinalist list.

Golden Tate is one of 10 receivers to be named a Biletnikoff Award semifinalist. The honor will be cut down to three finalists in November, but for the time being, here are the other 9 receivers up for the award:

Freddie Barnes, Bowling Green
Dez Briscoe, Kansas

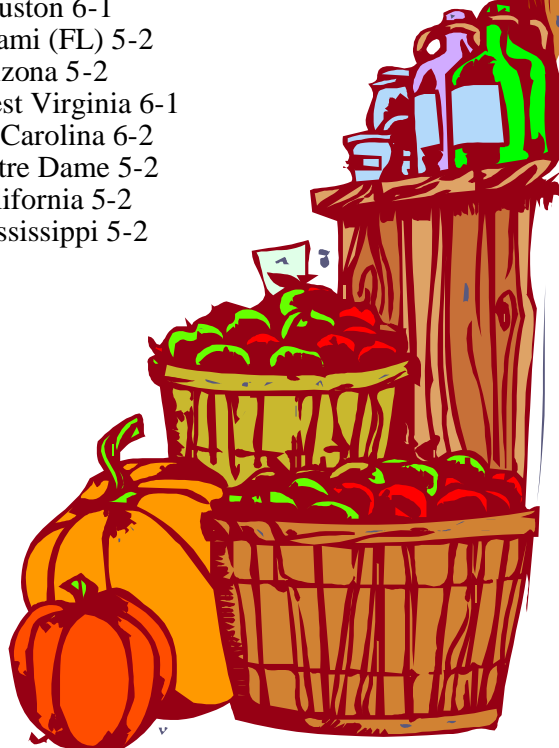


Vincent Brown, SD St.
Eric Decker, Minnesota
Mardy Gilyard, Cincinnati
A.J. Green, Georgia
Jordan Shipley, Texas
Demaryius Thomas, Georgia Tech
Mike Williams, Syracuse

Tate has 52 receptions for 847 yards and 8 touchdowns through 7 games. You've got to think Tate will be in the final three for this award if he keeps up this scorching pace.

BCS Standings

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1 Florida 7-0 | 2 Alabama 8-0 |
| 3 Texas 7-0 | 4 Iowa 8-0 |
| 5 USC 6-1 | 6 TCU 7-0 |
| 7 Boise State 7-0 | 8 Cincinnati 7-0 |
| 9 LSU 6-1 | |
| 10 Oregon 6-1 | |
| 11 Georgia Tech 7-1 | |
| 12 Penn State 7-1 | |
| 13 Virginia Tech 5-2 | |
| 14 Oklahoma St 6-1 | |
| 15 Pittsburgh 7-1 | |
| 16 Utah 6-1 | |
| 17 Ohio State 6-2 | |
| 18 Houston 6-1 | |
| 19 Miami (FL) 5-2 | |
| 20 Arizona 5-2 | |
| 21 West Virginia 6-1 | |
| 22 So. Carolina 6-2 | |
| 23 Notre Dame 5-2 | |
| 24 California 5-2 | |
| 25 Mississippi 5-2 | |



Notre Dame Tied For Fourth In 2009 NCSA Division I Collegiate Power Rankings

Fifth consecutive year that Notre Dame has placed in the top five Division I schools in annual rankings combining athletic and academics.

The University of Notre Dame ranks among the top five NCAA Division I institutions in the country in combining athletic and academic achievement, according to the annual rankings released Monday by the National Collegiate Scouting Association in Chicago.



University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN

Notre Dame ranked fourth (in a tie with Harvard) among NCAA Division I universities and 12th overall in the annual NCSA Collegiate Power Rankings, trailing only Stanford, Princeton and Duke in the Division I standings.

The NCSA Collegiate Power Rankings assess the academic and athletics standards of all NCAA and NAIA athletic programs across the country. Rankings are calculated for each college and university at the NCAA Division I, II and III levels by averaging the academic rankings from *U.S. News & World Report*, the strength of the athletic departments by the NACDA U.S. Sports Academy Directors' Cup ranking, plus each school's student-athlete graduation rate.

In the 2009 ratings, Notre Dame finished 21st in athletics, 18th in academic rank and 31st in NCAA graduation rank, for an average 23.33 power ranking.

This marks the sixth straight year Notre Dame has finished fifth or better in the NCSA rankings. Here are standings from those six years:

ND Men's Basketball: Transfer Martin tears ACL,

By: Observer Sports

Junior guard Scott Martin tore his anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and will miss the 2009-10 season, the athletic department said Monday.

Martin tore his ACL during a preseason workout on Oct. 1, the statement said. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) exams Monday confirmed the injury.

"I am very disappointed for Scott," coach Mike Brey said in the statement. "He had worked so hard last season in practices and in the weight room improving his overall strength and getting himself ready to be a big part of our lineup this season. We are expecting Scott to make a full recovery and he will use this year to rehabilitate his knee in preparation for the 2010-11 season."

The statement said Martin will have surgery during the week of Oct. 19.

Martin transferred in June 2008 from Purdue, where he averaged 8.5 points and 3.8 rebounds per game during the 2007-2008 season. He sat out last season because of the NCAA transfer rules.

"Scott Martin is going to be a very good player here at Notre Dame," Brey said. "It's now just going to be a little bit longer wait before we can get him on the court."

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Past Rankings

- **2009:** 1. Stanford 8.66, 2. Princeton 15.0, 3. Duke 20.33, **4. (tie) Notre Dame and Harvard 23.33.**
- **2008:** 1. Stanford 10.66, 2. Duke 14.66, 3. Princeton 21.33, 4. Harvard 21.66, **5. Notre Dame 23.66.**
- **2007:** 1. Duke 11.66, **2. Notre Dame 18.33,** 3. Stanford 20.66, 4. N.western 21.66, 5. Harvard 26.33.
- **2006:** 1. Duke 11.33, 2. Stanford 13.0, **3. Notre Dame 15.0,** 4. Princeton 16.66, 5. Harvard 24.0.
- **2005:** 1. Duke 8.66, 2. Stanford 13.0, 3. Princeton 15.0, 4. Harvard 15.33, **5. Notre Dame 22.33.**

<http://www.und.com/genrel/100509aab.html>

Irish's Freshman Eifert needs back surgery

Tony Krausz, *The Journal Gazette*

Notre Dame freshman tight end Tyler Eifert has joined the team's growing list of injured players.

The former Bishop Dwenger star has a back injury, coach Charlie Weis said Tuesday.

"He needs to have a procedure done," Weis said. "I'm going to wait until the week of fall break because it is going to cost him some time. By having that procedure done, we might not have him for the rest of the year."

Notre Dame's fall break is the week of Oct. 20.

Weis said if the procedure was done now, it would cause Eifert to miss some classes, and the procedure needs to be done before the end of the season so Eifert's condition doesn't get worse.

Eifert is eligible for a medical redshirt because he only played in Notre Dame's 35-0 season-opening win over Nevada on Sept. 5.

Irish junior kicker Brandon Walker is also dealing with a back strain, according to Weis. Walker was replaced by freshman Nick Tausch at the start of the season and hasn't played.

"He's seeing one doctor and checking with another one," Weis said. "As it currently is, he wouldn't be able to kick good enough to even consider putting on the field at this time."

Weis did have some good news in regards to injuries. Quarterback Jimmy Clausen, who has a turf toe injury and wasn't at the part of Tuesday's practice that was open to the media, will practice today. Weis said he told Clausen he could have the week off, but the junior wanted to practice.

Also, fullback James Aldridge is going full speed again at practice. The senior injured his shoulder in the season opener and has sat out the last four games. "He actually practiced full go for the first time (Tuesday)," Weis said. "That's the first time he has been exposed to actually using his shoulders and everything. There didn't look like there were any ill effects."

With Notre Dame (4-1) on a bye this week leading to its home game against USC (4-1) on Oct. 17, the coaching staff is using this time to evaluate what to do with the freshman class.

Weis said most of the freshmen who haven't played in the first five games will likely not play this season.

"There are a couple of guys that are closer to being needed," Weis said. "I think in most cases for guys who haven't gone at this point, we'd probably be moving in that direction (of not playing them this season to save a year of eligibility)."



Floyd brightens ND's day

By ERIC HANSEN *Tribune Staff Writer*

The best news to hit the Notre Dame football program this week may have nothing to do with Saturday's game. Michael Floyd returned to the practice field Tuesday afternoon - way ahead of schedule.

Not enough ahead of schedule that he could play in the game Saturday at Notre Dame Stadium, but a mid-November return to game action is now possible.

Floyd, one of the leading receivers in the nation when he suffered a broken collarbone Sept. 19 against Michigan State, was originally projected to return for a possible bowl game in late December or early January.

"Today is the first day we're letting him run around with pads, so the players will be a little surprised," Notre Dame coach Charlie Weis said Tuesday afternoon. "We're going to get a scan the second of November. And based off the results of that scan, they'll determine if and when we can get him back. Obviously our fingers are crossed. The earliest we can get him back is Pittsburgh."

That's Nov. 14 on the road. But Weis was later informed that the best case scenario is actually better, with Floyd possibly returning Nov. 7 against Navy. The Irish have two regular-season games after the clash with Pittsburgh - Nov. 21 against Connecticut and Nov. 28 at Stanford.

NOTES FROM THE DOME

From Cappy Gagnon

Five former coaches were asked by the Sporting News to pick the former national football champion closest to returning to power – Michigan, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Tennessee or Miami. R.C. Slocum took Miami. Vince Dooley took Nebraska. John Cooper took Notre Dame. Bill Mallory took Michigan. Frank Broyles took Tennessee.

A story on golfweek.com suggests that the top candidate for the PGA commissioner job is 1993 magna cum laude Notre Dame graduate Pete Bevacqua. Also a Georgetown law grad, Bevacqua worked for the New York law firm of Davis, Polk & Wardwell and has been with the USGA since 2003. He was named the USGA chief business officer in July 2007.

Notre Dame's football game with Washington drew a 3.3 overnight rating on NBC.

The new *ESPN College Basketball Encyclopedia* says Notre Dame has the #12 most successful program of all time, as computed by Jeff Sagarin and ESPN's stats and information staff. On a decade basis, the Irish finished #4 in the 1940s, #17 in the '50s, #8 in the '70s, #30 in the '80s, #28 in the 2000s. The list of 50 greatest players has Austin Carr #24.

Now that Jimmy Clausen is filling expectations at the University of Notre Dame and climbing his way up the list of Heisman hopefuls, former Irish legend Joe Theismann is a believer. But Theismann doesn't want Clausen thinking about leaving school early for the NFL. "I would tackle him if he tried to leave the university and come out this year," Theismann said on the "Waddle & Silvy" show on ESPN 1000 in Chicago. "Jimmy Clausen, I hope, has proven to a lot of people that he's one heck of a young quarterback. I mean, Jimmy is like Jay Cutler to me. They both have grown up and come to understand that you don't always have to make all the plays, but when your moment comes and that opportunity presents itself for you to have to step up, you can get it done. He's learned how to be a leader. He's certainly handled all kinds of pressure well. [But Clausen] has work to do. I'm not happy with the way he throws the fades. I think he needs to be able to be able to throw the ball down the field more efficiently. His delivery is a little bit unorthodox, but we have a lot of guys in this game with unorthodox deliveries that have done well. If you look at the Notre Dame Football Team, they have a chance to really be able to do something special a part of this year and I believe all of next year. You get [[Michael Floyd](#)] and [[Golden Tate](#)] and Jimmy together, and how about [[Kyle Rudolph](#)] at tight end, I mean you're talking about an offense that has been quite prolific. That really can be so much better next year. Plus why would Jimmy Clausen want to come out when he's faced with [Sam Bradford](#), [Tim Tebow](#). You've got [Colt McCoy](#), you've got all



Cappy and Crazy Lou 10/3/09

these guys coming out this year. Stay in [school]."

This marks the fourth time in five years that the Irish have stood 4-1 after five games in the Weis era. Other recent 4-1 starts came in 1998

(eventually 9-3), 1996 (8-3), 1994 (6-5-1), 1991 (10-3), 1990 (9-3) and 1987 (8-4). Maybe the best 4-1 start came in 1977 when the Irish ended up consensus national champs after a second-game loss at Ole Miss.

There was a story in the business section of the *Chicago Tribune* about Stan Bowman, the Chicago Blackhawks general manager (and Notre Dame graduate), and his fight with lymphoma that involved chemotherapy, radiation and a stem cell transplant.

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Submitted by Marty Ridgley

Western Michigan to play at Notre Dame next season

By Graham Couch | Kalamazoo Gazette

Mostly in jest, Bill Cubit first brought up the idea last spring while visiting a Notre Dame football practice. “Hey, why don’t you schedule us?” Western Michigan University’s football coach asked an Irish football staffer. “He kind of laughed,” Cubit said. Six months later, it’s no joke.

Western Michigan will play at Notre Dame next season, both schools announced. The Oct. 16 date brings with it an \$800,000 payday for WMU, which will be the first Mid-American Conference program to play the Irish. The Broncos played Notre Dame in both 1919 and 1920, long before the MAC was formed.



“Who would’ve think it?” Cubit said. “... They don’t get much better than that. You like the kids to have a great, great experience. And there’s probably no greater experience than Notre Dame.”

Landing an NBC-televised game with the most storied program in college football took a bit of luck, some cooperation from an old friend at Virginia Tech and the bending of a new MAC policy that, beginning next year, forbids teams from playing nonleague games after the first six weeks of the season. “To finally get one like this is extremely exciting to everybody,” WMU athletics director Kathy Beauregard said. “A lot of pieces had to fall into place.”

Starting with Notre Dame, which last month found itself with an unexpected hole in its 2010 schedule after a tentative opponent backed out. “We put notice out to a number of schools,” Notre Dame athletics director Jack Swarbrick said. “Western did a great job. They got on it and were a great partner in trying to make this work. They deserve a lot of credit. “Frankly, how much effort they put into it and how responsive they were to the situation made it very easy. ... With a lot of other schools, it got pretty complicated.”

Actually, it wasn’t “very easy.” But WMU did its best not to bother Notre Dame with its complications. The Broncos didn’t have an opening in their 2010 schedule, with contracts already signed for home games against Idaho and Nicholls State and road dates with Michigan State and Virginia Tech.

Virginia Tech athletics director Jim Weaver, the AD at Western Michigan from 1996-97, agreed to move WMU’s scheduled game in Blacksburg, Va., to 2016. “He knew what it meant for us,” Beauregard said about her former boss, whom she first called Oct. 3 from the press box at Northern Illinois.

From a financial standpoint, it means WMU’s football program will bring in \$1.5 million in guarantees next season — including its \$700,000 deal to open at MSU —

without the expense of a single chartered flight for the second straight year. “Economically, it makes all the sense in the world,” said Cubit, whose program was able to keep the rarity of a six-home-game schedule intact. “... In these tough times, I think we’re doing a pretty good share to help out the whole athletic department. That’s our job.”

Of course, for WMU, playing Notre Dame is about far more than the money saved on a short bus trip down US-131.

“It’s three hours of advertising for Western Michigan University. You can’t buy that, and they’re paying us. I mean, you can’t get any better than that,” Cubit said.

“The kids 15, 20, 25 years from now, I mean this is what they’re going to remember. ... Every kid that’s on the team, we’ll take them. That’s what you do. You recruit and that’s what you tell them. It’ll be a big recruiting plus.”

http://www.mlive.com/broncos/index.ssf/2009/10/western_michigan_football_to_p_1.html

Herzlich receives Irish jersey

By: Laura Myers

Prior to Saturday’s game, Irish coach Charlie Weis and receiver Barry Gallup, Jr. presented an honorary Notre Dame jersey to Boston College linebacker Mark Herzlich.

Herzlich, the 2008 ACC Player of the Year, was diagnosed with Ewing’s Sarcoma, a rare form of cancer, in April and has been in treatment ever since. He has hopes to return to Boston College if he is able to recover fully.

Charlie and Maura Weis donated \$5,000 to Uplifting Athletes, a non-profit that benefits athletes with rare diseases.



Purdue, Notre Dame agree to extend football series through 2021 season



Sporting News staff reports

The Indianapolis Star reports that the Purdue-Notre Dame football series has been extended through the 2021 season, ensuring that the streak of 64 straight seasons in which the schools have played will continue for at least 12 more years.

The schools have played 81 times overall in a series that began in 1896.

"The atmosphere at our game this season epitomizes what the Purdue-Notre Dame game is all about," Purdue coach Danny Hope said in the statement. "It was electric at Ross-Ade Stadium."

Purdue led in the fourth quarter of this year's Sept. 26 game before a Notre Dame touchdown with 25 seconds remaining gave the Irish a 24-21 win.

2010 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Sept. 4 PURDUE

Sept. 11 MICHIGAN

Sept. 18 at Michigan St

Sept. 25 STANFORD

Oct. 2 at Boston College

Oct. 9 PITTSBURGH

Oct. 16 W.MICHIGAN

Oct. 23 at Navy (E. Rutherford, NJ)

Oct. 30 TULSA

Nov. 13 UTAH

Nov. 20 Army (at Bronx, NY)

Nov. 27 at USC

Irish Mens BB picked for 8th

At Big East Media Day on Wednesday, the Notre Dame men's basketball team was picked to finish 8th in the conference.

Villanova has been picked as the favorite to win the 2009-10 BIG EAST regular-season crown in the BIG EAST Preseason Coaches' Poll. The Wildcats, who advanced to the NCAA Final Four last year, finished just ahead of West Virginia. Villanova received 10 first-place votes and 218 points in the poll. The Mountaineers picked up five first-place votes and 215 points.

1. Villanova (10)
2. West Virginia (5)
3. Connecticut (1)
4. Louisville
5. Georgetown
6. Syracuse
7. Cincinnati
8. Notre Dame
9. Pittsburgh
10. Seton Hall
11. St. John's
12. Marquette
13. Providence
14. USF
15. Rutgers
16. DePaul

Villanova is the coaches' top choice for the first time since the 2005-06 poll, which was the first season that the BIG EAST included 16 teams. The Wildcats boast a deep backcourt led by senior Scottie Reynolds. West Virginia's No. 2 position this year is the highest in the pre-season poll for the Mountaineers since they began competing in BIG EAST basketball in 1995-96. WVU has four starters returning from a club that finished 23-12 last season.

Connecticut, the third-place pick with 185 points, received the other first-place selection. The Huskies joined Villanova at the Final Four last year and finished 31-5. Louisville, the defending regular-season and league tournament champion, was a close fourth, earning 179 points. The Cardinals have advanced the NCAA Elite Eight in each of the past two seasons.

Georgetown was the fifth-place selection with 161 points followed by Syracuse in sixth place with 152 points. The Hoyas, who stumbled in league play last year with a 7-11 mark, can build around sophomore center Greg Monroe, the 2008-09 BIG EAST Rookie of the Year. Syracuse was 28-10 last year and 11-7 in conference play. The Orange have posted 12 straight 20-win seasons.

The conference head coaches feel Cincinnati is capable of moving up in the standings. They placed the Bearcats, who were 8-10 in league play each of the past two seasons, seventh with 135 points, just ahead of Notre Dame. The Fighting Irish, who had 132 points in the poll, want to improve on last year's 8-10 league mark. Pittsburgh is ninth with 119 points with Seton Hall placing 10th at 110 points. The Panthers will aim to maintain their contending role despite losing four starters from last year's 31-5 team. Seton Hall, 17-15 a year ago and 7-11 in the BIG EAST, welcomes back sharpshooting guard Jeremy Hazell and three other starters.

St. John's, which returns its top eight players from last season, picked up 82 points in the poll, which was good for 11th place. Marquette, which lost four starters from last year's 25-10 squad, was 12th at 78 points.

Boston College's Herzlich gets support from South Bend

Life's about living. Life's about walking to the end of the pier at New Buffalo beach on a windy day, being soaked to the bone, but loving every minute.

Life's about watching a newborn fawn struggle to find its legs. Life's about the view from Sister Barbara Anne Hallman's window, at the Sisters of St. Francis Convent across from Marian High School.

Sister Barbara Anne sincerely appreciates life. A native of the Detroit area who took her vows with the Sisters of St. Francis in 1952, Sister Barbara Anne spent most of her adult life as a teacher and principal at Catholic schools across the country.

"We always say, 'Join the convent, see the world,'" Sister Barbara Anne said with a laugh and smile that never melts.

At the Mishawaka convent, in semi-retirement, she's in charge of day and weekend retreats. Four years ago, her work schedule was interrupted by a battle with cancer. The disease didn't stand a chance against this marvelous lady with a positive outlook and appreciation for life.

What makes Sister Barbara Anne truly special is her zest to share her gifts. The power of her pen is matched only by her order's power of prayer.

At the request of friends, she began writing two Marines - one from Crown Point, Ind., one from Hammond, Ind. - who were stationed in Iraq. "Even though they were coming from a stranger, they said they loved my letters," Sister Barbara Anne said. "They would pass them around their platoon."

Her letters focused on life, and the beauty of nature outside her window.

A computer "amateur," Sister Barbara Anne said last spring she stumbled onto a story that tugged at her heart. It was about the cancer diagnosis for Boston College All-America linebacker Mark Herzlich.

One day, he's the physically-strapping leader of the BC defense. The next, a cancer patient with more questions than answers. "I've lived for more than three-quarters of a century and I still have some unfulfilled dreams," Sister Barbara Anne said. "What about this young man? There's so much he has to live for."

The brash part of Sister Barbara Anne's personality doesn't allow her to sit back and wallow - even in someone else's misery. She took action.

Somehow - she couldn't do it again on a bet - she found an address for Herzlich on the Internet. Sister Barbara Anne wrote him a letter and touched his soul.

Since her first correspondence in May, she's written every two weeks. "She has such a positive attitude," Herzlich said of Sister Barbara Anne. "What made (her letter) unique was that it was someone away from the whole football experience. She had no idea who I was. She's a cancer survivor. It's someone who was able to fight it and beat it."

Sister Barbara Anne just wanted Herzlich to know that she and the 80 or so other members of the order at the Mishawaka convent were there for him. "We've got a powerhouse of prayer here," Sister Barbara Anne said. "We've got someone in our chapel 24 hours a day, and he's one of

those we're praying for."

Herzlich, who has cancer in his left leg, has gone through 36 days of chemotherapy and 25 days (two treatments a day) of radiation. Doctors have said the cancer has all but disappeared in his leg. However, a long road still lies ahead. He'll finish his chemotherapy sessions by mid-November, then will have surgery to have a stabilizing rod inserted into his left femur.

If all goes well, he plans on a late-spring or summer return to football. He's expected to be at Notre Dame Stadium Saturday afternoon when his Eagles pay a visit. Sister Barbara Anne was hoping to spend some time with him.

"A couple weeks ago, (Herzlich) sent me an autographed picture," Sister Barbara Anne said. "I had to look at it a couple times before I realized it was a game he was playing against Notre Dame. He snuck that one in on me."

Along with Sister Barbara Anne's correspondence, Herzlich has developed other relationships. Notre Dame head coach Charlie Weis and receiver Golden Tate have also formed bonds.

Weis called Herzlich this summer to let him know he lit a candle for the linebacker in The Grotto. Through texts and calls, a relationship developed. "You want to talk about a winner, that kid's a winner," Weis said of Herzlich. "We communicate regularly. Even something little, I just push him. I don't let him feel sorry for himself."

Weis recalled a time in preseason camp when he considered giving his players a practice off and, instead, taking them to a lake. He ran the idea past Herzlich to get a player's perspective. "When we were on the bus going up to the lake, he texted Golden Tate saying, 'Hey have a good time at the lake.' Golden texted him back and said, 'How the hell did you know we were going to the lake?' He goes, 'I was in on this the whole time.' "Probably the funniest thing he said was if the people from Boston College knew that the head coach from Notre Dame and I are friends, they would probably disown me. "I have a lot of respect. I already had respect for him as a player, I have much more respect for him as a person."

"It's one thing to reach out and give encouragement," Herzlich said. "It's another thing to take it upon yourself to become a guiding force and really a friend where there's really no reason for him to be one. (Weis has) been great."

Whether or not the dream of playing again ever happens isn't important. "When you're part of a team, you have built-in friendships with 100 guys," Herzlich said.

"Through this, those friendships have grown stronger, the bond has been greater. "When you're 18 or 19, you feel invincible. You're playing on national TV, grades are going well, life's pretty good. Something like this puts everything in perspective."

"I just want to run back onto the field with those 100 guys. This isn't about getting into the NFL. I just want to be out there with my friends." The support system's in place. He's got a powerhouse of prayer in his corner.

Life's really pretty good.



Frightnight At The Alamodome:

Notre Dame Channels Their Inner Santa Anna

by Marc Halsted (Bleacher Report)

(Notre Dame needs a woodshed game. They need to go down to San Antonio, line up against an inferior Washington State team, and get a convincing win to rebuild confidence.)

They could surely use a solid offensive performance, (300-yards passing from Jimmy Clausen, 150-yards rushing from Armando Allen, and 100 yards receiving from someone new would be nice)

The defense of Notre Dame needs to reflect that the defensive backfield has made its mid-season adjustments, and that Jon Tenuta can orchestrate more than a seven-man blitz package. No matter who comes to play for the Fighting Irish, one thing is for sure: It's time to breakout.

2009 has not been kind to Washington State. Coach Paul Wolff's squad is 1-6 and has been outscored 259 to 106. The run-game accounts for a mere 2.2 yards per play and has totaled just 508 yards, compared to the 1508-yards rushing surrendered to their opposition.

The Cougar passing attack has put up just over 220-yards per game. They have shown signs of life in the past two weeks with Freshman Jeff Tuel who threw for 354 yards, two touchdowns, and no interceptions in a 49-17 loss to California last weekend.

The offensive stats are feeble but they pale in comparison to a defense that surrenders an astounding 35+ points per game. Led by junior safety Chima Nwachukwu's 55 tackles and redshirt freshman Travis Long (four tackles for a loss and two sacks) the Cougars defense has some young talent but they lack the depth and muscle to over-power older, more experienced programs like Stanford, USC, Oregon, & Arizona St.

WSU plays from behind early, strays from the running game, and must air it out for three quarters to keep the scoreboard from tipping over. Notre Dame has the clear advantage in nearly every offensive scenario and will be expected to produce early and often. WSU has been outscored 112-3 in the first quarter. ND will want to start fast and never take their foot off the peddle.

After six straight games that have come down to the dramatic depths of the fourth quarter, Notre Dame needs a defining victory over an inferior football team. They not only need it for the intrinsic benefit, but for public perception.



Southern California, and ample amounts of national attention, it's time for the University of Notre Dame football program to make a defining statement.

If the Irish want to legitimize their rankings, the recent BCS conversations, and the two-man Heisman hype over Clausen and Golden Tate, then they need to simply do what is expected. They need to crush Washington State, beat Navy by two touchdowns, take a victory from number 15 Pittsburgh, and manufacture quality wins over Connecticut & Stanford.

It all starts on Halloween against the Washington State Cougars.

It's time for a frightening beat-down from the Fighting Irish



(Photo by Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images)

Giovanni Bernard Commits to Notre Dame

Frank Vitovitch , UHND

Notre Dame picked up commitment #17 on the season on Monday with Saint Thomas Aquinas running back Giovanni Bernard. The Fort Lauderdale native visited Notre Dame for the USC game two weeks and visited Colorado this past weekend before picking the Irish.

Bernard is a compact running back with excellent vision and balance. He gets a lot of yards after contact because of his ability to stay on his feet. He isn't a burner, but he makes plenty of big runs by hitting the hole quick and breaking tackles. He is a very well rounded back who has the ability to be a #1, work-horse type running back on the college level.

Bernard told Irish Sports Daily that academics were a big part of the reason he selected Notre Dame.

"I picked them because they have a good situation for me," Bernard said. The St. Thomas Aquinas standout becomes the 17th player to give Irish head coach Charlie Weis his oral pledge, and second running back joining Cameron Roberson. "Coach (Tony) Alford, the running backs coach was truthful to me, and most of all, the education that they offer and life after football is my biggest thing."

He also told Oregon Live that the coaching staff, and its similarities to his coaching staff at Saint Thomas Aquinas, played a role in his decision.

"It's just a great program all around and it has everything I am looking for in a school," Bernard told Rivals.com. "I visited there for the USC game. They work like our coaches at St. Thomas. It should be an easy transition for me but I know it would be no matter where I go."

Tom Lemming rates Bernard as a four star running back mainly for his vision and tackle-breaking ability.

"I really like him," said Lemming, who gives Bernard four-plus stars on his five-star scale. "I thought he was one of the better running backs in the country. Even though he's small, he's the kind of small back you like."

"He's got the balance, vision and leg strength that Notre Dame is looking for," Lemming said. "The height doesn't matter. What matters is the leg strength and the ability to break tackles."

Lemming's opinion on Bernard is backed up by the highlight reel below.

Bernard has been hampered by a hamstring injury this year which has caused him to miss multiple games, but as a junior he ran for 1,528 yards on 160 carries with 15 touchdowns. That's an impressive average yards per carry of 9.6.

This gives Notre Dame two running backs with Bernard joining Cameron Roberson and closes out running back recruiting in this class. Bernard also hails from the same high school as current Notre Dame players Sam Young, Dan Wenger, Ben Turk, and Jordan Cowart. He also has three teammates - Cody Riggs (CB), LaMarcus Joyner (CB), and Bradon Linder (OT) - that Notre Dame is currently recruiting and hoping will join him in the class of 2010.

Women's Soccer: Squad nabs regular season conference championship

By: Douglas Farmer

Notre Dame (14-3, 11-0-1 Big East) ended the regular season on a 12-game unbeaten streak and a six-game winning streak to claim its 12th conference title in its 15 seasons in the league.

"[Winning the Big East title] is hard to put into words because we always talk about the standard that this program has set for itself," Irish coach Randy Waldrum said. "It is something we don't take for granted by any means, but it is certainly one of the goals we have every year."

The No. 6 Irish hosted and beat four conference foes over the past two weekends by a combined score of 12-1. First Notre Dame topped Connecticut 6-1 and then Providence 2-0 last weekend. Then the Irish beat Villanova and No. 22 Georgetown, each 2-0, this past weekend.

"[The successful home stand] was fantastic just from a standpoint that it allowed to wrap up the conference championship which is always one of the things we want to achieve," Waldrum said. "More important than anything is the fact that we started playing better in the last month of the season. We are coming together at the right time of the year."

Junior forward Taylor Knaack scored four goals in the four games, including two goals along with an assist against Connecticut.

"[Taylor] has been huge for us in the last four games in particular but it goes back a little earlier than that," Waldrum said. "She got the game-winner on the road at West Virginia, and since then she has really started to gain some confidence in her goal scoring. She could not have picked a better time to get hot."

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