Irish Extra

The Observer

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By DENNIS CORRIGAN
Sports Editor

For Notre Dame's David Rivers, the 1986-87 basketball season has been a long climb.

Barely more than six months ago, Rivers was in a hospital fighting for his life. Now he's once again leading the Irish in the fight for a national title.

On Aug. 24, 1986, Rivers and former Irish teammate Ken Barlow were involved in an auto accident in which Rivers was hurled through the window of the van Barlow was driving. Rivers suffered a 15-inch cut to his abdomen and underwent three hours of surgery.

He remained in the hospital until Sept. 2 and into the Notre Dame inminerary until Sept. 13. At the time, basketball was not a priority, recovering from the accident and trying to keep up with classes was.

On Sept. 21, Rivers began a long and trying rehabilitation program which included treadmill work, limited weights, riding an exercise cycle and later jogging and shooting in a swimming pool. Through it all, Rivers kept his perspective, and worked to get back on the court. Now with an NCAA berth secured he knows it was all worth it.

"It was something that I was enthusiastic about doing because I knew it was geared to getting better and my getting back on the court," says Rivers. "So all the rehab and the training was for this. It was for us getting an NCAA bid and having a shot at the title."

It wasn't until Oct. 6 that Rivers began to run on a track and Nov. 1 that he began to shoot and have limited participation in practice. Finally on Nov. 16, he was able to practice full speed.

He saw 34 minutes of play in Notre Dame's opening loss to Western Kentucky. Less than two weeks later, he went the full 40 minutes in Notre Dame's near-upset of Indiana. From then on he began to show improvement, scoring 16 and 20 points in wins over Cornell and Brigham Young. But as he progressed, Rivers had to deal with reporter after reporter who was writing a story on his miraculous recovery.

"Yes, I was tired of talking about the accident," says Rivers. "But you've got to look at it this way, they're doing their job. I guess people are curious. They want to know. I looked at it in that way. I didn't think of it as being a negative.

Looking back now, Rivers gives credit to the extended Notre Dame family for giving him the strength to continue.

"When I was having a crisis, everyone was there for me," says Rivers. "No matter what it was I needed, there was someone there to give it to me. Coach Phelps was there, the guys on the team were there as were families around South Bend. It helps out a lot because you know there are people out there pulling for you and praying for you. It keeps your spirits up."

But just as he started to show signs of getting over his accident, Rivers tore a thigh muscle in late December and sprained an ankle (he still wears a water cast on it) in January against Creighton. Both injuries hampered his effectiveness and the Irish struggled into the last week of January with a 9-5 mark. Rivers now admits to feeling a little frustrated.

"I think this year I had to take a different role out on the court than last year," said Hicks. "Last year we had Tim Kempton, Kenny Barlow, Jim Dolan and Joseph Price and now this year with David, Mark, and Donald, I just take a different role and look at it a different way.

"I think my role is to do what is needed at a particular time."

Rivers' soaring layup over Miami's Kevin Presto symbolized his rise from near death to a shot at a national title.
In an act typical of the closeness of the Irish basketball team and its fans, Hicks introduced his mother to the crowd following his final game at the ACC.

If I have to shoot an outside jumper, then I’ve got to hit it. If I have to go to the boards or play the point or whatever the case may be, then I’ve got to be prepared and go out and do it.

“When you’re a senior, everybody looks at it as your most important year,” continued Hicks. “But just by being a senior, that means that Donald and I have to lead by example.”

Combined with co-captain Donald Royal’s team-leading 15.6 points per game, these two seniors will be missed by next year’s team. But some other people might welcome the two players in the basketball world.

Will Hicks play in the NBA?

“Obviously, that’s hard to say right now,” says Phelps.

“Guards are more abundant in the NBA right now. A lot of teams go with the one guard and four players, so that makes it a lot tougher.”

Royal also sees Hicks’ emergence as a matter of time.

“It’s a matter of just waiting your turn,” said Royal. “With David’s accident, it was a difficult situation for him to get in. But he made the best out of it. He went out and proved it.”

For Hicks, the story of his season is still being written. There’s still more one step to take before it’s all over.

“Our goal at the beginning of the season was to go as far as we can in the tournament and that’s a national championship,” said Hicks. If we play hard and do what we have to do, we can capture the dream.
Rivers' recovery spurs ND wins over top-ranked foes

continued from page 1

"It was frustrating, but it wasn't frustrating to the point where I was mad or anything. But when the final week in January began, the Irish began to think they should have let us in the Tournament. We want to prove there is a reason why the NCAA put us there."

The Blue Raiders have plenty of ammunition. Senior guard Duane Washington keys their fast-paced attack. In addition to averaging 10.4 points, he had 248 assists in the season. With an assist total like that, it's easy to see why the rest of the starting five all have double-figure averages.

Irish Statistics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PLAYER</th>
<th>Q-B</th>
<th>MIN-AVG</th>
<th>FG(3P)-FTA</th>
<th>FT-FTA</th>
<th>PCT</th>
<th>PF</th>
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Most Losses by NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Champion

- Villanova 1985
- North Carolina State 1983
- Indiana 1981
- Marquette 1977
- Louisville 1986
- Michigan State 1979
- Kentucky 1985
- City College of New York 1950
- Oregon 1939

NCAA Tournament Lists

| OPPONENTS | 29-29 | 5875-202 | 48150-1409 | 482 | 478 | 431 | 757 | 993 | 332 | 476 | 349 | 50 | 152 | 8736 | 64.6 |

SOURCE: Modern Encyclopedia of Basketball and the Sporting News

| ONLY CENTER WHO MADE THREE APPEARANCES IN THE NCAA FINAL FOUR |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Jerry Lucas       | (1960-1962)     | Ohio State      |
| Paul Hogue        | (1961-1963)     | Cincinnati      |
| Rusty Clark       | (1967-1969)     | North Carolina  |
| Lew Alcindor      | (1967-1969)     | UCLA            |
| Bill Walton       | (1972-1974)     | UCLA            |
| Akeem Olojuwon    | (1982-1984)     | Houston         |

SOURCE: Modern Encyclopedia of Basketball and the Sporting News
NCAA Pairings

First Round
March 12-13

Second Round
March 14-15

Regional Semifinals

Regional Finals

Final Four

National Championship

First and second round sites

1 Atlanta, Georgia
March 13 & 15

3 Charlotte, North Carolina
March 12 & 14

5 Salt Lake City, Utah
March 12 & 14

7 Indianapolis, Indiana
March 12 & 14

2 Birmingham, Alabama
March 12 & 14

4 Syracuse, New York
March 13 & 15

6 Tucson, Arizona
March 13 & 15

8 Chicago, Ill.
March 13 & 15