We need to care about Our Lady. We need to care about Notre Dame.
The helmets will still be gold. The weather will still be awful. The field will probably still be 100 yards.

That’s about all that will be familiar Saturday as fans get their first glimpse of the new Notre Dame team, with a different coach on the sidelines and a different quarterback leading the huddle.

Supporters will head to the Blue-Gold Game looking for proof that change is not always a bad thing.

But at this point, the Irish have nothing to prove. It would be a stretch to say that Irish coach Brian Kelly has installed a new offense and defense for the scrimmage. A more accurate statement is that Kelly has begun to install his new scheme and the players have begun to learn it. The entire breadth of the new systems certainly won’t be seen Saturday. The coaches seem hopeful that a majority of the new offense will be installed in time for Purdue in September.

Most of the spring practices were spent getting players used to the speed of practice and teaching them about expectations. “Progress” meant being able to go all-out for 75 active minutes of a two-hour practice. On Saturday, it will be the same; the team will be expected to go full-speed through the first half, but may need to tone it down for the second.

The defense won’t be given full rein during the game, either. That’s for good reason, as it would be irresponsible to allow an important offensive player to get hurt in a game that doesn’t matter. But it means that sophomore linebacker Manti Te’o, one of the more entertaining players on the defense, probably won’t be making any massive hits, nor will any others.

Junior quarterback Dayne Crist, recovering from off-season knee surgery, will play but has admitted that he is not at 100 percent. Junior tight end Kyle Rudolph, recovering from off-season shoulder injury, will be used sparingly.

The same goes for junior linebacker Darius Fleming and sophomore wide receiver Theo Riddick, both of whom will be important figures in the fall. In short, the spring game will be absent much of the excitement a real game would bring, in terms of interesting game plans, big tackles and star players.

Through 13 practices, the same words have sprung up over and over. “Evaluation,” the coaches said. “Competition,” the players translated. And that won’t change by Saturday. The glorified practice will certainly showcase some of Notre Dame’s excellent talent, but it will really be nothing more than a couple extra hours of film for the coaches to dissect leading into the summer session.

It might allow them to make a decision on whether senior Taylor Dever and junior Trevor Robinson should play right guard or right tackle. Or whether freshman receiver Tai-ler Jones is ready to line up opposite Michael Floyd. It might allow them to answer 1,000 other little questions.

Or it could answer nothing at all.

In his last scheduled interview before the Blue-Gold Game, Kelly had little to say about a depth chart. “We need more time,” he said. “We need all summer, we need preseason camp. We’re going to need all our time.”

Kelly was speaking specifically about the wide receiver situation, but his message applies to every aspect of Notre Dame’s team as it stands.

The Irish need all the time they can get, and it seems clear from the spring that Kelly will use that time wisely. After a summer of hard conditioning and a grueling camp in August, when the new recruits have been added and more of an offense installed, the team will have something to prove. But not yet. The Blue-Gold Game will certainly be exciting for anyone looking to see Brian Kelly in action. But it won’t hold any indication of what this team is capable of. And it shouldn’t.

The views expressed in this column are those of the author, and not necessarily those of The Observer. Contact Laura Myers at lmyers2@nd.edu

Don’t expect to see whole new system just yet

Laura Myers
Sports Writer

Wide receiver Tai-ler Jones, an early enrollee, is one of many Irish looking to use Saturday's Blue-Gold Game to impress Brian Kelly and the new coaching staff one more time before spring practice ends.

The Observer ◆ IRISH INSIDER

Friday, April 23, 2010

Laura Myers
Sports Writer

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By MATT GAMBER
Sports Writer

When Brian Kelly was first introduced as Notre Dame's football coach on Dec. 11, he said he wanted "tough gentlemen" who would represent the University on and off the field. Irish players in need of an example should look no further than their new coach.

In his first four months on campus, Kelly has demonstrated a noticeable effort to increase his program's visibility within the Notre Dame and South Bend communities. To do so, he's spoken at a variety of campus events ranging from Notre Dame Women's Basketball games to the Junior Parents Weekend Closing Brunch to a student government meeting earlier this week.

Kelly said his program will be "a part of what makes Notre Dame special," something said many have admittedly been the case before he arrived. So, he made an effort to be "approachable" and has emphasized that his players will be true student-athletes and that Notre Dame is a "part of the University community."

That's the gentleman. Always in a suit, looking and sounding more like a politician than a hard-nosed coaching veteran charged with resurrecting the country's most storied football program.

Walk toward the LaBar Practice Complex, though, and by the time you reach the Jordan Hall of Science, you'll see the new football head coach of the University community.

That's the renovator. Always in a shirt, looking and sounding more like a political operative than a hard-nosed coaching veteran charged with resurrecting the country's most storied football program.

Still, Kelly said he hears other schools calling and requesting his program by telling high school players they'll have to work too hard to succeed to be eligible at Notre Dame.

"They want to lose kids that way, that's why we're losing them," said Kelly. "I want guys that understand if we're here, you're going to get a powerful brand in Notre Dame on your degree's. But if we're there, you'll get to work for it. That's the kind of guy I want, somebody who recognizes the value of what makes this unique, and the academic and athletic value.

While those academic demands do trim the list of players that Irish can target, Kelly and his staff have cast a much wider net than the previous regime, in terms of offering scholarships to high school prospects. With a much greater number of available scholarships — roughly 20 per year it demands and the head coach believes this strategy will prove successful, it's clear the new staff is putting in the work necessary to recruit effectively.

Kelly said his effort, coupled with Notre Dame's national recognition, will enable the staff to recruit coast to coast to find players with "the right kind of intrinsic values we need." "Notre Dame is not meant for everybody," Kelly said. "When I got here, our guys thought about themselves first, then their family, then their teammates, then Notre Dame. I want them to flip that. They're here for Notre Dame, first and foremost, and that's really the paradigm change for our players.

They're going to be concerned about how they're doing for Notre Dame, and in each other during the past month of spring practices."

"And when they rate high school students, they don't give you four or five stars because you fit the model of Notre Dame," Kelly said. "Somebody's got to have more than four or five stars to impress us because we want more than that.

To assess those attributes, Kelly said his staff must develop relationships not only with the recruit himself, but also with his family and coaches, through campus visits and consistent correspondence. Kelly's assistants have spent countless hours getting to know a player before assessing him within a standardized ranking system (detailed in the graphic at bottom left), and before Kelly will sign an official scholarship offer to a recruit.

"It's not just becoming the head recruiter for the player's geographical location must all approve," Kelly said.

So, for a running back from New Orleans, the head coach, tight end coach, offensive coordinator Chuck Martin and lead Chicago recruiter Chuck Martin said they will participate in campus programs and community service events while also becoming "more involved in church and chapel."

That same concept extends to the practice field this spring. Though Kelly has at times been known to be tough on his team, he said the players have begun to grasp not only the new offensive and defensive schemes, but also the attitude they are expected to take with them every day.

"I'd call it conscious competence where we are now. They know what we're asking, they're trying to do it every day, but it's really hard," Kelly said. "We want to get to unconscious competence, where it's in their blood and they don't have to think about it. They know what to expect when they go on the field, they know how we want them to practice and how we want them to compete." That learning process hasn't always been comfortable for the players. Kelly said junior center Braxston Cave, for example, struggled with his shotgun snap during the first week of practice.

"Every time he had a bad snap, I made sure he heard me. It got to the point where we just pulled him out," Kelly said. "They were hard on him, but we hadn't had a bad snap since."

Kelly said he made it clear during his first several team meetings that he'd be tough on all his players, but he also knows there's a line — he even invoked the old "beating a dead horse" cliché.

"I've got to be careful about what you're getting on a guy for, and you've got to know that what you're demanding is going to help him be a better football player," Kelly said. "I don't need to hear, 'well, he doesn't handle criticism.' I'm not talking about doing it the right way.

"We're talking about attention to detail and skill development. It cuts across. If you're thinning your path, you're either going to get tougher skin or you're probably not going to make it."

"Irish coach Brian Kelly has begun to instill into his team a sense of pride in the University of Notre Dame and in each other during the past month of spring practices."

"Notre Dame is not meant for everybody. And when they rate high school students, they don't give you four or five stars because you fit the model of Notre Dame."

Brian Kelly Irish coach

Irish coach Brian Kelly has begun to instill into his team a sense of pride in the University of Notre Dame and in each other during the past month of spring practices.

"Notre Dame is not meant for everybody, and when they rate high school students, they don't give you four or five stars because you fit the model of Notre Dame."

Brian Kelly Irish coach

Brian Kelly's "Inverted" Recruiting Scale

4.0

3.0

2.1

2.0

1.0

He just doesn't have the things we look for.

A guy we would keep on our system.

He has some of the criteria and the profile we're looking for but missing something of the pieces.

Someone that has all those in place, but may have a flaw in another strength or position, another test score, or some senior film, or a chance to meet the parents.

He's got a great high schoolossier and we're willing to overlook a flaw.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 1.5. It's nice to add another piece to the puzzle.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 1.2. It's coming close to something we would like and we're on our board.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 1.0. It's coming close to something we would like to add to the puzzle.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 0.8. It's nice to have but we don't have to sign.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 0.6. It's nice to have but we don't have to sign.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 0.5. It's nice to have but we don't have to sign.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 0.3. It's nice to have but we don't have to sign.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 0.2. It's nice to have but we don't have to sign.

A scholarship offer has been tagged a 0.1. It's nice to have but we don't have to sign.

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"They're going to be concerned about how they're doing for Notre Dame, and in each other during the past month of spring practices."
Projected

Editor's Note: The depth charts above are based on spring practice observations.
Depth chart

By Observer beat writers Matt Gamber, Laura Myers and Douglas Farmer.
New staff gives receivers chance to compete

By LAURA MYERS
Sports Writer

If recent practices are any indication, the first three wide receivers fans will see Saturday will be junior Michael Floyd, senior Duval Kamara and early enrollee freshman Tai-ler Jones. But many others are competing for playing time that wide receivers coach Tony Alford said is anything but secure.

"We'll see. Guys have to keep making plays," Alford said. "It's an ongoing process, and just because you're there doesn't mean you'll be there the next day or if you're not there doesn't mean you won't be there the next day."

Junior John Goodman and sophomores Theo Riddick and Darius Comley look to be the next three competing for a spot on the first team. As a freshman in 2007, Kamara set receiving records for total receptions and touchdown receptions by a freshman with 32 and four, respectively. His role decreased in the following years, however, as he had to compete with Floyd — who broke both records in 2008 — and with former Irish receiver Golden Tate.

"You're going to compete, either way, no matter who's here ... We have a bunch of talented guys."- Duval Kamara Irish wide receiver

Jones, Rees lead early enrollees into college

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Editor

Freshman early enrollee Tai-ler Jones has spent as much time taking snaps with the first team offense as he has with the second, yet Irish coach Brian Kelly and his coaching staff don’t mind reminding Jones that he is, in many ways, still a high school senior.

"He's still got the tattoo on the car window from graduation. He's just a young kid," Kelly said after Saturday’s practice. "He's got a chance to be a player for us and can contribute this year, but his work volume really tapers off." Jones and the four other early enrollees — quarterback Tommy Rees and defensive backs Chris Badger, Spencer Boyd and Lo Wood — have all needed to adapt to a change in lifestyle, both on and off the field. The fact that they can handle that change sets them apart, wide receivers coach Tony Alford said.

I think it takes a special young guy to come in at semester. You've got to be a little more mature for your years to come in," Alford said earlier in the spring. "These guys right now, their buddies are getting ready for prom. They're trying to pay somebody to be their date, and these guys are stuck here at college in the middle of spring football practice."

They’re also on a new campus taking college classes at one of America’s toughest academic universities.

"Coming from high school, it is different in college life," Rees said with a chuckle. "You have to find out where your classes are, how to get there ... You just have to make sure your time is divided up equally, find the balance between football and school."

That balance can be tough to find when you also need to absorb a playbook. Jones has spent 20 years running, but, in a way, the early enrollees have an advantage over the rest of the team in this regard, offensive coordinator Charley Molnar said.

"I think being a blank slate is a good thing from the standpoint that the techniques, play calls and all the things that we do are so different from what the previous system was," Molnar said. "They don't have to have two systems in their heads."

But they still do need to adjust to a BCS-level practice. Throughout his rise up the depth chart, the coaching staff routinely criticized Jones for a lack of endurance. Something Jones does not dispute.

"There is no question, (enrolling early) has helped him a lot," he said. "Going through winter workouts, getting with (quarterback and conditioning coach Paul Longo), getting with the quarterbacks and the other receivers. There is no way he would be ready to play if he came in August." Come August, Molnar said Rees could also contribute, knowing Kelly’s penchant for playing many quarterbacks for various reasons.

"He really is made for a spread offense," Molnar said. "He's got a quick release, he makes very quick decisions, has quick feet in the pocket. From that standpoint, I think he's got a real chance to be a player here at Notre Dame."

This is why the early enrollees left behind graduation ceremonies and prom dates, Jones said.

"When I hit campus, my plan was to make the best of every chance I get, and help the team in any way to win, whether it is on special teams, or second or third on the depth chart," he said. "Whatever I could do."

At the least, Jones, Rees and the three defensive backs underclassman to work with their decision, Alford said.

"It takes a mature guy to do that," he said. "They're all doing a good job, and I'm proud of them." Contact Douglas Farmer at dfarmer1@nd.edu

In that regard, enrolling early may have been the only solution. Molnar said.

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Junior Duval Kamara leads a pack of receivers vying for playing time in Notre Dame's new spread offense.

You're going to compete, either way, no matter who's here ... We have a bunch of talented guys." - Duval Kamara Irish wide receiver

Senior Duval Kamara leads a pack of receivers vying for playing time in Notre Dame’s new spread offense.
Switch should benefit both Wood and Riddick

By MATT GAMBER
Sports Writer

In one of his first public personal decisions in early March, Irish coach Brian Kelly said he would move sopho- 
mores Theo Riddick from run- 
bning back to wide receiver to clear room in the backfield for, among others, Cierre Wood.

Riddick was second to only Golden Tate in all-purpose 
yards for the Irish last sea- 
son, as he 

r e c e i v e r s 

Alford

received and 849 

r e t u r n i n g

kicks as a true 

r e t u r n i n g

r e t u r n i n g

2010 Schedule

Sept. 04 vs. Purdue @ Notre Dame
Sept. 11 vs. Michigan @ Notre Dame
Sept. 18 vs. Michigan State @ East Lansing, MI
Sept. 25 vs. Stanford @ Notre Dame
Oct. 02 vs. Boston College @ Chestnut Hill, MA
Oct. 09 vs. Pittsburgh @ Notre Dame
Oct. 16 vs. Western Michigan @ Notre Dame
Oct. 23 vs. Navy @ East Rutherford, N
Oct. 30 vs. Tulsa @ Notre Dame
Nov. 14 vs. Utah @ Notre Dame
Nov. 20 vs. Army @ Yankee Stadium @ Bronx, NY
Nov. 27 vs. USC @ Los Angeles, CA

By DOUGLAS FARBER
Sports Editor

Throughout its first month on 
campus, the Irish coaching staff 

messed up instead of coaching 

b e t t e r , a n d t h e y a l l w a n t t o 

p l a y , " H i n t o n s a id . " I t o l d m y 

g u y s v e r y h o n e s t l y , i f y o u ' r e 

s e l f i s h a n d r e a l l y w o r r i e d 

a b o u t p l a y i n g t i m e , o r n u m- 

b e r s o f r u n s o r c a t c h e s , o r y o u 

s e e a b u d d y m e s s u p a n d y o u ' r e 

a l m o s t h a p p y h e 

m e s s e d u p i n s t e a d o f c o a c h- 

i n g h i m b e t t e r , y o u ' r e t h e w r o n g 

g uy f o r u s . T h e b o t t o m l i n e 

i s t h i s a b o u t w i n n i n g . "

Hinton said. “I think Notre Dame would like 

Cierre’s had a really solid

spring and he’s getting better 
every day,” Hinton said. “He’s

the rawest of the guys we

have, but he got the fewest

reps of anybody coming in

here. He has more develop-

ment to do than most, but he

wants to be

good and he

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to take for him to be
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For Riddick, while his posi-
tion has

change-

d i n d i v i d u a l

d a d v a n c e

c h a n t y

hadn’t. W i d e

r e c e i v e r s

coach Tony

Alford

coached the running backs last year and was the only

assistant retained from

Charlie Weis’ staff. He said

Riddick is far from a finished 

project but has shown prom-

i s e i n h i s f i r s t f e w w e e k s a t

receiver.

“He’s still learning some

t h i n g s , ” A l f o r d s a i d . “ H e ’ s g o t 

t o p a y a t t e n t i o n t o t h e d e t a i l s 

of the game, squareroutes, in and out of breaks and things like that.

But he’s coming along.”

Throughout its first month on 
campus, the Irish coaching staff

focused on the recruiting class

that will join Notre Dame in the 

coming fall. As soon as National

Signing Day passed in February, 

the coaches refocused their efforts

on making up the ground lost in

recruiting battles for members of

the high school Class of 2011.

“We were way behind after

Signing Day — it wasn’t just get-
ting through last recruiting sea-

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With about a dozen recruits visit-
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“This is going to be a pretty

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Chicago-area wide receiver

DaVaris Daniels could potentially

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“(Daniels) fits perfectly into

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“They aren’t going to take a whole

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Cornerback Matthias Farley also

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Recruits visit campus

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Notre Dame faculty and students, be sure to call Anytime Fitness at 574.204.2166 for information on special membership rates.
Offer valid for Notre Dame students and employees only.
Offer expires 5.31.10

Anytime Fitness

Anytime Fitness

Present this coupon and receive 20%* off one (1) general book, gift or apparel item.
Valid 4/16/10 - 5/1/10. Discount may not be combined with any other offer. Valid in-store at the Eddy Street Commons location only. No additional discounts. Limit one coupon per customer. Coupons may not be duplicated. Excludes gift cards. No cash value.

Camellia Cosmetics
Camellia Cosmetics carries your favorite lines including Bare Minerals, Paula Dorf, and Mario Badescu to name a few. More than a makeup store, Camellia makeup artists stay up to date on all the current trends to help solve your skin and makeup issues in ways you never imagined!

Kildare’s Irish Pub
Welcome to Kildare’s, an Authentic Irish Experience. The true flavor of Ireland permeates every aspect of Kildare’s, from every stone, mural and tile placed, to hearths of its fireplaces, to its distinctive recipes and music.

Nicholas J Salon & Spa
Undo what everyday stress does to you. Experience the latest in Aveda hair colors, cuts, makeup, skin care, massage and aromatherapy.

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Camellia Cosmetics

FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES
Fairfield Inn & Suites is perfect for parents visiting the University of Notre Dame, game day guests, business or pleasure travelers. Located across the street from the campus, this South Bend hotel allows Notre Dame home game attendees to enjoy the benefits of walking to the game and all-the-while still being just a short drive to other activities throughout the city.

FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES

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1234 NORTH EDDY STREET SUITE 115 574.287.9880 SOUTH BEND IN 46617
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