Irish Insider analysis

The NCAA recommendation on Saturday night, that the entire team had been informed of his recommendation was not an easy one to make.

"For many of you who may have thought that was a foregone conclusion, I would say to you that the decision was harder than you might have thought, principally because of the man it involved," Swarbrick said. "Those of us who had the opportunity to work closely with Coach Weis or play for him couldn't help but develop a great affinity for him."

"I hope we can find somebody who loves this University as much as he did, does, and who cared as much about his student athletes as he does," Swarbrick announced that until a new coach is hired, assistant head coach Rob Ianello would assume the responsibility for football operations. Ianello served as the wide receivers coach and recruiting coordinator and had previously coached at Wisconsin, Arizona and Alabama.

"Rob is a skilled coach and has already played a central role in coordinating our recruiting and I know will provide us with the leadership we need going forward between this period of time and when we have a new coach in place," Swarbrick said.

Swarbrick did not offer a timetable as to when he expected to name Weis' successor, and he said he had not yet begun to contact any potential replacements.

"I'll have its own pace," Swarbrick said of the coaching search. "We'll begin immediately and move as expeditiously as we can. There is always the possibility that Bowl commitments or other things play a role for some of the people involved."

"As you look at the entire course of the season, it led you to the conclusion that you couldn't have enough confidence that a jump up was imminent, that you could know with sufficient certainty that next year's results would be significantly different." Swarbrick said.

"I will say that it is important to us to look first and foremost at people who have demonstrated an ability to build and sustain a Division I college football program," Swarbrick said. "Rampant media speculation surrounding Weis' job status began following Notre Dame's 23-21 loss to Navy on Nov. 7. The Irish defeat was the second in three years to the Midshipmen, who had previously lost 43 straight games to Notre Dame before breaking the streak in 2007."

"The Irish never recovered, losing a hard-fought road game to highly ranked Pittsburgh, 27-22, the next week. Notre Dame then dropped its second straight Senior Day game, 33-20 in double overtime to Connecticut, on Nov. 21, before heading to Stanford for the season finale."

"The season's disappointing ending came after a 6-2 start rekindled preseason predictions of a BCS berth for this team. Swarbrick said the sudden drop-off over the past four weeks played a critical role in his decision."

"As you look at the entire course of the season, it led you to the conclusion that you couldn't have enough confidence that a jump up was imminent, that you could know with sufficient certainty that next year's results would be significantly different," Swarbrick said. "And so I think that was probably the tipping point."

"Weis' dismissal did not come entirely as a surprise to the Notre Dame players, junior receiver Golden Tate said Monday. "I knew that it was a possibility that he was leaving and I knew it was a possibility he was staying," Tate said. "I took the approach of expecting the worst, but preparing for the best. The administration made an educated decision and I have to support it. I'm in this program and I've got to support the decisions they make and try to make this program a better program.""

Swarbrick had in recent weeks denied a variety of reports suggesting Weis had been terminated. Reports had surfaced that Weis was fired before the Connecticut game, and others claimed he cleaned out his office before the team's trip to Stanford. None of those were accurate, Swarbrick reaffirmed Monday. "He made many contributions to the University, important things which serve us in good stead going forward," Swarbrick said. "He demonstrated that he can bring the very best student athletes to this campus and attract them to come here to play football for Notre Dame, and he demonstrated that once they're here, they can have the full success we expect from student athletes."
The worst-kept secret in South Bend is finally out of the bag.

Around 3 p.m. Monday, Notre Dame students received an e-mail confirming that Charlie Weis will not return as head football coach next season.

While the announcement may not have come as a surprise, it was a jarring reminder that, for the third time in a row, Notre Dame football will enter next season with a new head coach.

By now, everyone knows the damning statistics about Char- lie Weis’ tenure at Notre Dame. He presided over the worst three-year stretch in Irish history, guiding the team to a 16-21 record since 2007. Losses to Syracuse, Connecticut, Air Force and Navy — twice — rank as some of the most indefensible in Notre Dame history.

The 2007 season will un- doubtedly be remembered as the tipping point in Weis’ term. From a mismanaged preseason and an ineffective and poorly-executed kickoff derby to the first loss to Navy in 44 years, the Irish have suffered from a lack of emphasis on special teams consistent ranked at the top of many college football programs.

From a mismanaged preseason and an ineffective and poorly-executed kickoff derby to the first loss to Navy in 44 years, the Irish have suffered from a lack of emphasis on special teams consistent ranked at the top of many college football programs.

Yet there were high points. A rain-soaked win over Michigan in 2007 was the last time Notre Dame destroyed powerhouses over Hawaii and Nevada and coming oh-so-close to finally beating USC this October.

The systemic deficiencies, though, were present throughout. During Weis’ entire tenure, and especially over the past three years, the Irish have suffered from a lack of emphasis on the defensive side of the ball, an ineffective and poorly-developed rushing attack and a general lack of fundamental football skills. The Weis era will likely be remembered for missed tackles, poor line play and wasted opportunity.

In the end, Charlie Weis’ greatest shortcoming was simply that he couldn’t be someone he wasn’t: a college football head coach. Coming from an X’s and O’s NFL mentality, Weis never fully understood that college football games are ultimately won and lost in the trenches.

While Golden Tate and Jimmy Clausen have flourished in Weis’ pass-first system, players like Armando Allen and Sam Young just haven’t quite seemed to live up to their po- tential. Amid all the rubble, however, there is hope.

Whichever the next coach is — and there will be plenty of candidates — isn’t a head coach.

But Gasque said Weis is actu- ally there’s a lot of talent. "We have a lot of talented players," he said. "But Notre Dame is held in high esteem even when they lose, so they aren’t hungry enough." Smith said the next Irish head football coach will be to motivate the players. "Someone like [Florida coach] Urban Meyer would be great, but he’s not going to leave his team," he said.

After two disappointing foot- ball seasons from Weis, Bush said he had low expectations for this season — and those ex- pectations were met. "How many games were de- cided in the last two minutes?" Bush said. "This was a long time coming." Following a couple mediocre sea- sons, junior Colleen Harris said she expected to hear Weis wouldn’t be retained after the Stanford game Saturday. "All I can say is, he had two Navy losses," she said.

Looking to the future, Waller said she believes the team’s performance next season de- pends on whether Tate and Clausen stay. But Smith said he thinks next season hinges on the new coach’s chemistry with the team.

"We have a lot of talented players," he said. "But Notre Dame is held in high esteem even when they lose, so they aren’t hungry enough." Smith said the next Irish head football coach’s challenge will be to motivate the players. "At ND, the football team is really a business," he said. "It’s not fun. A coach needs to make the game fun again."

Contact Madeline Buckley at mbuckley@nd.edu

For more matchups and pregame analysis, check out the Irish Insider podcast at ndsmcobserver.com/podcast

Weis not answer, but future is bright

By MADELINE BUCKLEY News Editor

The news of Irish football coach Charlie Weis’ firing spread fast across campus. For many students, like senior B.C. Smith, the reaction was simple: “Finally.”

“Everyone pretty much saw this coming. It was just a matter of time,” Smith said. “I don’t know what Notre Dame was thinking when they extended Weis’ contract so long in the first place.”

Watching four football sea- sons as a Notre Dame student, Smith said he saw a talented team wasted by poor coaching. "Weis did well with [former coach Tyrone Willingham’s] people but he failed when he played with his own recruits," he said. "But the team has tal- ent.”

Junior Dashaun Gasque said Weis’ biggest handicap was his coaching on defense. "He’s great offensively but I was disappointed in his defen- sive tactics this season," Gasque said. "The last game proves that — the defense just wasn’t there."

“Weis would do better with an offensive coaching job. He’s just not a head coach.”

But Gasque said Weis is actu- ally in an enviable position right now. "He’s going to make millions getting fired," he said. "I would like to get fired just to make that much money.”

Junior Maggie Waller said she almost felt bad for Weis, except for the fact that his termination will earn him millions. "It’s terrible that we have to pay him so much,” she said. "His contract should never have been extended." Waller said she believes the downside of Weis being fired is the possibility that quarterback Jimmy Clausen and wide re- ceiver Golden Tate, both jun- iors, will leave with Weis. "I’m nervous because I think this means Jimmy and Golden will leave,” she said. "I’ll cry if Golden leaves.”

Freshman Roberto Pellhas said he thinks the University made a mistake in firing Charlie be- cause he believes Clausen no longer has an incentive to stay another year. "I think it’s a huge mistake be- cause Jimmy and Golden are behind him,” he said. “We will lose our star players which is disappointing because the team has a lot of talent.” Freshman Neil Eveld said a coaching change is exactly what the football program needs, but the new coach should be chosen carefully. "They finally fired Weis, but now we better get a big-name to replace him," he said. "[Uni- versity of Cincinnati head coach] Brian Kelly would be perfect.”

Junior Nathan Bush said he thinks people hoping for a big- name replacement will be dis- appointed. "Someone like [Florida coach] Urban Meyer would be great, but he’s not going to leave his team,” he said.

Weis’ contract so long in the past two seasons. Sure, the Irish are held in high esteem even when they lose, so they aren’t hungry enough. Smith said he expects next season hinges on the new coach’s chemistry with the team. "We have a lot of talented players,” he said. "But Notre Dame is held in high esteem even when they lose, so they aren’t hungry enough.” Smith said the next Irish head football coach’s challenge will be to motivate the players. "At ND, the football team is really a business,” he said. "It’s not fun. A coach needs to make the game fun again.”

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**Recruiting**

**Recruits weigh options with Weis out**

By BILL BRINK
Sports Writer

Regardless of the manifestation of Charlie Weis' coaching abilities, he always whipped up impressive recruiting classes.

Now that recruiting force is gone, and the Irish set about the task of retaining those recruits who have verbally committed while still attracting those who were undecided.

Athletic Director Jack Swarbrick said he did not expect committed recruits to back out of their verbal commitments because they committed to the University, not necessarily one man.

"The young men that picked this place have picked this place," Swarbrick said. "They were attracted to the coaches they met and no doubt were attracted to Coach Weis and have an affinity for him. But as we've talked to them today and will continue to talk to them, we're hearing the message we would expect to hear, which is I'm very sorry to hear that, but you still offer the things that attracted me to the University, and so I'm still coming."

Interim head coach Rob Ianello, who also serves as the recruiting coordinator, agreed with Swarbrick and said Weis' firing may not be the only question mark for potential recruits.

"Anybody that might be wavering I think as recruiting goes might have been wavering no matter what the circumstances might have been," Ianello said. "I think we're prepared for that, prepared to move forward to try to secure those commitments first and foremost and then move forward to some guys that we're still recruiting that are uncommitted at this time."

Ianello said the staff would be visiting the homes of potential recruits this week.

The coaching change will most likely not affect many of those who have verbally committed. Mike Frank, a Notre Dame recruiter and analyst who runs the ESPN-affiliated site Irishsportsdaily.com

"Most of the committed guys I think you'll see will stick around," Frank said. "The uncommitted guys, that's going to be the interesting thing. The new coach will have a lot of selling to do."

Frank said if Notre Dame hires a big-name coach, such as Oklahoma's Bob Stoops, Florida's Urban Meyer or former Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach and current ESPN commentator Jon Gruden, signing uncommitted recruits will become easier. Smaller names, like Cincinnati's Brian Kelly, might have more trouble, but Kelly's personal nature may win over some recruits, Frank said.

Swarbrick said the timetable for finding a new head coach is open-ended. Frank said getting the right coach is important for Notre Dame than finding one quickly.

"Most of the committed guys I think you'll see will stick around."

Mike Frank
Irish recruiting analyst

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**Player Reaction**

**Squad upset but understanding of coach’s dismissal**

By MATT GAMBER
Sports Editor

Monday's announcement that Irish coach Charlie Weis would not be retained didn't come as much of a surprise, but hearing the news from director of athletics Jack Swarbrick still hurt, several Notre Dame players said.

"I'd be lying to say we didn't hear that it was a possibility," said senior safety Kyle McCarthy, who was one of five Irish players made available to the media Monday. "Still, it was tough to hear that it's actually a reality.

Several players described their close relationship with Weis, who will not return to Notre Dame for a sixth season as head coach.

"It's hard to lose a family member, and that's how I see coach Weis," junior receiver Golden Tate said. "Those last weeks have been tough for us."

Senior center Eric Olsen said Monday in particular was a tough day, especially when he spoke to Weis after hearing word he had been let go.

"He was kind of trying to calm me down when I was talking to him today because I was pretty upset," Olsen said. "I just want everyone to know I'm indebted to coach Weis. Giving me a scholarship to play at the University of Notre Dame, it's a huge deal. It's changed my life."

Indicative of the relationships these players forged with Weis is the fact that Tate, along with junior quarterback Jimmy Clausen, will still consult with the former Irish coach Friday to discuss the possibility of forgoing a senior season to enter the NFL Draft.

"As far as I'm concerned, he's still a mentor for me," Tate said. "Every time I've talked to Coach I feel like he's talked to me like I was [Weis' son] Charlie Jr. And that's a good thing in my eyes.

He's always told me the truth, whether I wanted to hear it or not. That's one thing I really respect about him."

Olsen said if he could offer Notre Dame's next head coach some advice, he'd tell him, "heads up."

"He's definitely going to be under the microscope. It's not an easy job," Olsen said. "It takes a special kind of man to fill that spot. You have to have your heart in right for sure, or else you'll get swallowed up alive by everything that comes with the coaching job. It takes a Notre Dame guy to be a Notre Dame coach."

While the decision on who that guy will be ultimately rests with Swarbrick, Olsen said regardless of who is named Weis' successor, a coach alone will not single-handedly turn the Irish program around.

Rather, Olsen said, it will be a combination of the coaches and players working together to improve a Notre Dame team that has finished the last two consecutive regular seasons 6-6.

"Sometimes coaching changes can be a good thing. It kind of breaks up the continu-ous rituals and stuff that happen in football," Olsen said. "But at the same time, a coach can only do so much with X's and Os and motivating."
The highs and lows of Cha


Dec. 13, 2004
Weis, offensive coordinator of the New England Patriots, hired to be new head coach.

Jan. 13, 2005
Weis is introduced and makes remarks at halftime of the ND-Villanova men’s basketball game.

Oct. 15, 2005
In what will become a defining game of Weis’s career, Reggie Bush pushes Matt Letten to the end zone with three seconds left as No. 1 USC defeats No. 9 Notre Dame.

Jan. 1, 2006
Football Writers Association of America names Weis the Eddie Robinson Coach of the Year after he moved Notre Dame from 8-6 in 2004 to 9-2 in 2005.

Nov. 18, 2006
No. 8 ND defeats Army on senior night for eighth straight victory, improving to 9-1 on season.

January 2007
Prize recruit Jimmy Clausen enters early, Weis lands other top recruits in Golden Tate and Armando Allen.

Sept. 1, 2007
Georgia Tech beats ND 33-3 to open season.

Nov. 23, 2007
Navy defeats No. 4 Oregon 46-44 in overtime.

Sept. 23, 2008
Irish overcome 18-point fourth-quarter deficit to defeat Michigan State 40-37 in East Lansing.

Jan. 3, 2007
The Irish lose 41-14 in Sugar Bowl. Finish again with 8-3 record.

Jan. 6, 2006
The Sporting News names Weis No. 53 in their list of 100 most powerful people in sports. He was the highest-ranking individual associated with college sports, above Myles Brand, Joe Paterno, and Mike Krzyzewski.

Oct. 29, 2005
The Athletic Director Kevin White extends Weis’s contract from five to 10 years worth a reported $30 million to $40 million.

Sept. 3, 2005
Notre Dame tops No. 23 Pitt 42-21 in Weis debut game.

Sept. 10, 2005
No. 23 Irish travel to No. 3 Michigan, win 17-10.

April 2005
Weis begins to integrate nonprofit Hannah & Friends into community at Blue-Gold game.

Sept. 2006
Notre Dame defies expectations by blowing out Penn State 41-17, then loses 47-21 to Michigan the following week.

Sept. 29, 2007
ND loses 33-18 to Purdue to bring their losing streak to five straight—the worst opening in the history of the school.
Charlie Weis’ five-year tenure
By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Writer

Weis’ Road to ND

NFL success doesn’t translate to college for Weis

By BILL BRINK
Sports Writer

Charlie Weis’ affiliation with Notre Dame began long ago, when he was a student in the 1970s. He walked into then-University President Fr. Theodore Hesburgh’s office with a complaint about the state of the football team.

In his book, he said he left feeling humbled as if he could possibly be.

Now Weis leaves Notre Dame again, probably not with the same humbled feeling as he had as a student but possibly with a different perspective on the frustration of losing that he had as an undergraduate.

After graduating Notre Dame in 1979, Weis coached at Boonton High School and Morristown High School in his native New Jersey. In 1985, coach Joe Morrison at South Carolina hired him and he coached there for four seasons. He returned to New Jersey to lead Franklin High School to the state championship in 1992.

This year, Weis made his foray into the NFL, working in the New York Giants’ personnel department while coaching Franklin. In 1990, he became a Giants offensive and special teams assistant under Bill Parcells. The Giants won Super Bowl XXV that year, beating the Buffalo Bills 20-19, and Weis earned his first Super Bowl ring.

In 1991, Weis took over as the Giants’ running backs coach and served for two seasons.

Weis then spent four years with the New England Patriots, also under Parcells. He coached the tight ends during his first two seasons in New England. In his third, he replaced the running backs, and rookie Curtis Martin set Patriots records with 1,487 rushing yards and 14 touchowns.


They scored the second-most points in franchise history and earned their first-ever division title. The Jets’ top receivers were receivers Jetison Johnson and Wayne Chrebet, both passed 1,000 yards receiving under Weis, who was also the receivers coach. The Jets hadn’t had two 1,000-yard receivers since 1986.

From 2000 to 2004, Weis went back to New England, serving as the Patriots’ offensive coordinator under Belichick. New England won three Super Bowls during his time there and he helped make Tom Brady, the 199th overall pick in the NFL Draft, a top-tier NFL quarterback.

Five years ago yesterday, Notre Dame hired Tyrone Willingham as head coach. Their first choice, Urban Meyer, turned down Notre Dame and accepted the head coaching position at Florida. Meyer has since won two national championships with the Gators. Notre Dame then hired Weis and signed a six-year contract.

Midway through his first season, Weis signed a new 10-year contract that extended through the 2015 season and was worth anywhere from $20 to $30 million depending on reports. Weis compiled a 35-27 record at Notre Dame, won one bowl game and lost two.

Weis had success in his first two seasons at Notre Dame. The Irish almost upset USC at home during Weis’ first season, and he led the team to the Fiesta Bowl.

The Irish lost to Ohio State. In his second year, Weis led the team to the Sugar Bowl, but again the Irish lost, this time to LSU.

In his next three years, Weis went 16-21, including a 3-9 debacle in 2007. The Irish went 7-6 in 2008, beating Hawaii in the Hawaii Bowl. This season, the Irish finished 6-6 and lost their last four straight after starting 6-2.

Contact Bill Brink at wbrink@nd.edu

Interview with Rob Ianello

Assistants must secure future in wake of change

By BILL BRINK
Sports Writer

When the NCAA football season ended in December, then-Patriots offensive coordinator Charlie Weis, left, hugs New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick, center, and then-defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel after the Patriots won Super Bowl XXXIX in Jacksonville.

Weis’ future at Notre Dame was made quite clear Monday, Dec. 29, when Patriots coach Bill Belichick announced his firing, but the 11 assistant coaches on Weis’ staff await their destinies while Swarbick searches for a new head coach.

The odds are few of the 11 will be retained by whomever Swarbick picks as his assistant head coach Rob Ianello, who was given the responsibility of losing than he had as the head coach of the Minnesota Vikings.

Defensive coordinator Jon Tenuta did not find the same success at Notre Dame as he found at Georgia Tech the six seasons prior, but he will likely end up in the same position somewhere else in college football.

Running backs coach Tony Alford has never stayed at the same school for long, but in his past 14 years as running backs coach at various schools he has produced seven 1,000-yard rushers, and he should be given a chance for another season at another school.

The three remaining members of the coaching staff — tight ends coach Frank Verducci, defensive backs coach Ron Polwan and offensive graduate assistant Brian White — will all likely be elsewhere in college football next season as well.

Contact Douglas Farmer at dfarmer@nd.edu

Interview with Frank Verducci

Interview with Brian Polian

Interview with Rob Ianello

Interview with Jon Tenuta

Interview with Tony Alford

Interview with Randy Hart

Interview with Benie Parmalee

Interview with Ron Polwan
POTENTIAL REPLACEMENTS

Who will be next in line at Notre Dame?

By MICHAEL BRYAN
Associate Sports Editor

At Monday’s press conference, director of athletics Jack Swarbrick announced the search for Charlie Weis’ replacement had officially begun. This is a job in which there is great interest,” Swarbrick said. “It is a job in which people understand the potential that is here to return Notre Dame to a position of prominence in college football, and I’m excited to embark full bore on the process of finding the right next successor to the legacy of Rockne and Leahy and Parseghian and Holtz.”

Swarbrick denied reports that he had contacted potential replacements, but he said the search “has effectively begun.” At this point, the discussion of who will succeed Weis is entirely conjecture. But it sure is easy to understand the potential replacements, but he said the search “has effectively begun.”

At Monday’s press conference, director of athletics Jack Swarbrick announced the search for Charlie Weis’ replacement had officially begun. This is a job in which there is great interest,” Swarbrick said. “It is a job in which people understand the potential that is here to return Notre Dame to a position of prominence in college football, and I’m excited to embark full bore on the process of finding the right next successor to the legacy of Rockne and Leahy and Parseghian and Holtz.”

Swarbrick denied reports that he had contacted potential replacements, but he said the search “has effectively begun.” At this point, the discussion of who will succeed Weis is entirely conjecture. But it sure is easy to understand the potential replacements, but he said the search “has effectively begun.”

Contact Michael Bryan at mbryan@nd.edu

THE FRONTRUNNERS

**BOB STOOPS, OKLAHOMA COACH**

Recently finishing his 11th regular season at Oklahoma, Bob Stoops has brought tremendous success to the Sooners program since leaving his defensive coordinator position at Florida.

Stoops won six Big 12 championships and one national title in Norman, and has a 110-25 record as Oklahoma’s head coach. He has a wealth of experience coaching a top FBS program and had led the Sooners to eight BCS bowls in 11 years.

Despite his success, Stoops has faced recent criticism for his team’s failure to show up in big games, losing their last five BCS bowl games. With his proven track record winning at a top program, Stoops figures to be one of if not the top name on Jack Swarbrick’s list.

**BRIAN KELLY, CINCINNATI COACH**

Brian Kelly has become one of the hottest coaches in college football this year, leading Cincinnati to a 11-0 record heading into Saturday’s showdown against Pittsburgh.

Recently named one of the finalists for the George Munger Award for the best coach in college football, Kelly has led the Bearcats to a 33-6 record as a head coach. Kelly’s spread offense has put up impressive numbers and led Cincinnati to a Big East title and Orange Bowl appearance last year.

Kelly also has experience turning programs around, taking Central Michigan from a three-win team to the MAC Championship and a 9-4 record in just three seasons. If interested in the Notre Dame job, Kelly will not interview or have serious talks with the Irish until after this weekend’s game against the Panthers.

**SECOND TIER**

**GARY PATTERSON, TEXAS CHRISTIAN COACH**

Another coach that has led his team to an undefeated season in 2009, Patterson led TCU to a 12-0 record and a probable BCS birth this season.

The Horned Frogs have finished with 10 or more wins in six of nine seasons under Patterson. Despite battling for local talent against local powerhouses like Texas, Texas Tech and Texas A&M, Patterson has been able to develop elite talent in Fort Worth.

Patterson’s defenses have consistently ranked near the top national teams.

**BUTCH DAVIS, NORTH CAROLINA COACH**

After leaving his post as a coordinator for the Cowboys, Davis compiled a 51-20 record at Miami from 1995-2006, helping to return the program to prominence. The Hurricanes compiled an 11-1 record in his final year, and Davis laid the foundation for their 2001 national championship.

A top recruiter, Davis has helped improve a struggling UNC program after struggling in the NFL with the Browns. He has the head coaching experience the Irish are looking for and a history of bringing in top talent.

**CHRIS PETERSEN, BOISE STATE COACH**

Since taking over the Boise State program in 2006, Petersen has led the Broncos to a 47-4 record and a BCS win in his four seasons at head coach.

While Peterson has the least head coaching experience of any major candidate, he has a proven track record of success and player development at Boise.

He made his first impact on the national college football scene by leading the Broncos to an undefeated record in his first season, leading the team to a Fiesta Bowl upset of Oklahoma that featured several trick plays.

**THIRD TIER**

**KIRK FERENTZ, IOWA COACH**

Iowa’s coach of the last 11 seasons, Ferentz had one of the best years of his career this year, leading the Hawkeyes to a 10-2 record.

Iowa has shared two Big Ten titles under Ferentz, and made a BCS appearance in the Orange Bowl in 2002. Many major college programs and NFL teams have been rumored to have interest in Ferentz at different points in his career, but the coach has elected to stay in Iowa and currently has a contract to remain there until 2015.

**PAUL JOHNSON, GEORGIA TECH COACH**

A coach the Irish are familiar with facing, Johnson has had rapid success since taking over at Georgia Tech in 2008.

While many doubted that Johnson’s triple-option offense would work in a major conference, the Yellow Jackets have compiled a 19-5 record over the past two years as well play for the ACC Championship against Clemson Saturday.

Johnson led Navy to five straight bowl berths and a 45-29 record in six seasons in Annapolis.

**JIM HARBAUGH, STANFORD COACH**

The last opponent Charlie Weis faced, Harbaugh led Stanford to one of its best seasons in years in 2009, finishing 8-4 and 6-3 in the Pac-10.

In 2007 Harbaugh led Stanford to a huge win over No. 1 USC, upsetting the Trojans 24-23 despite being a 41-point underdog. The Cardinal again beat Pete Carroll and USC this season, defeating the Trojans 55-21 and scoring the most points against USC in program history.

**IN SWARBRICK’S DREAMS...**

**URBAN MEYER, FLORIDA COACH**

The top candidate for the Notre Dame job in 2004, Meyer turned down the Irish for Florida and has turned the Gators into the top program in college football after a successful run at Utah.

A former Notre Dame assistant under Lou Holtz, Meyer led Florida to national championships in 2006 and 2009, and the Gators are currently No. 1 in the BCS Standings and undefeated heading into Saturday’s SEC Championship game against No. 2 Alabama.

While Meyer has in the past called Notre Dame a “dream job,” he has denied having any interest in leaving Florida and has no reason to abandon a perennial title contender in Gainesville.

**JON GRUDEN, ESPN ANALYST**

Another name suspected as a candidate after Willingham’s firing, Gruden has family connections to the Notre Dame program, as his father was an assistant under Dan Devine.

Gruden has coached as an assistant at the college level, but gained notoriety at the NFL level as the coach of the Oakland Raiders and Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He led Tampa Bay to a Super Bowl win in 2002 over his former team.

Most recently, Gruden has been an analyst on Monday Night Football and recently signed an extension to remain with the program. It also seems unlikely that Swarbrick and the Irish would want to sign another professional coach who has no head coaching experience at the college level.
Stanford running back Toby Gerhart throws a touchdown pass on a trick play in the fourth quarter of the Cardinal's 45-38 win over Notre Dame. The Cardinal rushed for 280 total yards in the game.
Season ends in disappointment

Isaac Newton never met Charlie Weis, or any Notre Dame football players. If he did, he’d be in for a shock. After he got plunked on the head by a falling apple, Newton figured out some laws of motion, the first off which says that everything in motion stays that way unless some outside force acts upon it.

The Irish were 6-2 and had the momentum to cruise to 10-2 and a potential BCS berth, at the very least a New Year’s Bowl game. Four losses earlier that momentum has dissipated. So what outside force acted on the Irish? You could make the argument that Navy’s option attack, Dion Lewis/UConn’s run game and Toby Gerhart were “outside forces,” but the true actor that stopped Notre Dame was itself. They couldn’t finish. Newton wouldn’t know what to do with such empirical evidence.

Blame who you want, but Weis, as the face of the program, ultimately has to take the blame for the inability to convert talent to success. In the past three seasons, he’s gone 3-9, 6-6 and 6-6 after restocking the talent. Especially in light of the way the games this season were won and lost, Weis hasn’t prepared this team to win games.

The Midshipmen started it all, running the same offense they always do and still succeeding, rushing for 348 yards and beating the Irish at home by two. The thread started loosening in the second half, when a punt return for a touchdown by Armando Allen. But no finish. Like the Irish established the run even with Newton at the helm, the program ultimately has to live with the consequences.

Dan Jacobs/The Observer

Irish junior quarterback Jimmy Clausen talks with the media following Notre Dame’s 45-38 loss at Stanford Saturday. Clausen suffered a black eye in a reported altercation outside of C.J.’s Pub in South Bend early on Nov. 22.

Tune in to the Irish Insider podcast at ndsmobserver.com/podcasts.
Gerhart makes case for Heisman

By MICHAEL BRYAN
Associate Sports Editor

STANFORD, Calif. — On his final play of the game, the Irish defensive let Toby Gerhart into the end zone in the hopes of getting the stop. Kyle McCarthy said the game was going all out to stop him.

Sometimes when you're going all out, you're going too far.

Toby Gerhart runs upfield during Stanford's 45-38 win over Notre Dame Saturday night. Gerhart finished with 205 yards rushing and three touchdowns.

Notes: Tate breaks career record in loss

Stanford running back Toby Gerhart runs upfield during Stanford's 45-38 win over Notre Dame Saturday night. Gerhart finished with 205 yards rushing and three touchdowns.

By BILL BRINK
Sports Writer

With Stanford finally driving with a chance to even the score, Jim Harbaugh said about it, just gone out there week after week.

Toby [Gerhart] has it all with the way he's played.

Toby Gerhart's second touchdown put him into the record books, as he broke the Pac-10 single-season record for touchdowns in a season set by Kenjon Barner of Oregon in 2008. He has said it all with the way he's played, Stanford coach Jim Harbaugh said.

Toby Gerhart has said it all with the way he's played.

Gerhart's second touchdown came less than four minutes into the game. Following a Two-Richter fumble, Gerhart ran the ball three straight times for the Cardinal, breaking a tackle and using a hand to stay balanced and get two extra yards before diving into the end zone.

He's a phenomenal player, one of the best I've ever been around, Harbaugh said.

Gerhart's first touchdown came less than three minutes into the game. Following a 10-yard touchdown run in the third quarter, his second of the day, narrowed the third quarter, his second of the day, narrowed the score to 31-27.

He's a big physical runner, Irish coach Charlie Weis said in a press release. Everyone thinks he just runs north-south, but they run him to the edge a lot on a toss or a toss-sweep. When he gets too close to edge, you're in trouble.

With Stanford finally driving with a chance to even the game, Gerhart showed off his throwing ability in the fourth quarter. On a fourth-and-four play from the Notre Dame 18-yard-line, Gerhart took the pitch from quarterback Andrew Luck and completed a touchdown to wide receiver Ryan Whalen.

We practiced that once a week, I just threw up a prayer, Gerhart said. In practice (Whalen) is always wide open and in the game, his back was turned and I just threw it out there and he made a great play.

With his strong performances throughout the season and role in big wins over marquee opponents USC and Notre Dame, Gerhart seems to have played himself into the Heisman discussion.

Toby is too humble to say anything about himself, but how can you not at least invite him, Luck said. He put his team on his back. He makes everyone in the locker room a better player. I think he deserves it.

Contact Michael Bryan at mwbryan@nd.edu

scoring summary

Notre Dame 31, Stanford 20
Floyd 46-yard pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 0:00 remaining.
Drive: 4 plays, 76 yards, 1:50 remaining.
Notre Dame 38, Stanford 27
Gerhart 16-yard run (Whitaker kick) with 1:21 remaining.
Drive: 2 plays, 88 yards, :48 remaining.
Notre Dame 38, Stanford 35
Floyd 69-yard pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 2:32 remaining.
Drive: 8 plays, 61 yards, 5:47 remaining.

Third quarter

Notre Dame 31, Stanford 20
Floyd 46-yard pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 0:00 remaining.
Drive: 6 plays, 30 yards, 3:01 remaining.
Notre Dame 38, Stanford 30
Tate 29-yard pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 12:56 remaining.
Drive: 7 plays, 80 yards, 2:91 remaining.
Notre Dame 38, Stanford 38
Ryan Whalen 16-yard pass from Gerhart (Jim Dray pass interference penalty) with 11:37 remaining.
Drive: 7 plays, 67 yards, 3:50 remaining.
Stanford 45, Notre Dame 38
Gerhart 4-yard run (Whitaker kick) with 59 seconds remaining.
Drive: 10 plays, 72 yards, 1:49 remaining.

Stanford 45, Notre Dame 38
Gerhart 4-yard run (Whitaker kick) with 59 seconds remaining.
Drive: 10 plays, 72 yards, 1:49 remaining.

Byline: STANFORD, Calif. — Irish receiver Golden Tate broke Jeff Samardzija’s school record for career receiving yards. That Tate’s 205 yards in the game put him at 2,707 for his career, finishing the regular season with 1,736 yards. Gerhart’s 26 touchdowns also lead all running backs, and the senior averaged 5.6 yards per carry.

STANFORD head coach Jim Harbaugh ended the day, narrowed the deficit to 31-27.

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Quick off the blocks

In Notre Dame’s last three games, all losses, the Irish scored an average of eight points in the first half and 3.3 points in the first quarter. Against Stanford, they scored 14 points in the first quarter and 10 in the second. The 14 points in the first quarter were the most the Irish scored in the first period this season.

Tackling leaders

With his 10 tackles, freshman tackle Kavika Tauti finished with 63 on the season, making him one of four Irish freshmen to record more than 60 tackles in a season. Senior safety Kyle McCarthy, already the only Notre Dame defensive back to record 100 tackles in a season with 110 in 2008, did so again this year. His team-leading 11 tackles gave him 101 in the season.

So close …

Ten of Notre Dame’s 12 games have been decided during the final minute of the game or overtime.

To be honest with you, we didn’t finish, Irish quarterback Jimmy Clausen said. It’s frustrating. It seems that every time we lose a game it’s by a touchdown or less.

He’s right. Notre Dame’s largest margin of defeat has been seven points, during Saturday’s 45-38 loss to Stanford and a 34-27 loss to USC on Oct. 17.

Contact Bill Brink at bbrink@nd.edu

Stanford 10, Notre Dame 7
Floyd 12-yard run (Whitaker kick) with 11:34 remaining.
Drive: 5 plays, 8 yards, :47 remaining.

Second quarter

Notre Dame 14, Stanford 7
Whalen 40-yard field goal with 5:59 remaining.
Drive: 7 plays, 38 yards, 2:52 remaining.
Notre Dame 14, Stanford 10
Michael Floyd 10-yard pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 46 seconds remaining.
Drive: 10 plays, 76 yards, 5:12 remaining.

First quarter

Stanford 7, Notre Dame 0
Toby Gerhart 4-yard run (Whitaker kick) with 11:34 remaining.
Drive: 3 plays, 12 yards, 1:30 elapsed.
Notre Dame 7, Stanford 7
Golden Tate 5-yard pass from Jimmy Clausen (Dauder Ruffer kick) with 0:56 remaining.
Drive: 4 plays, 16 yards, 1:18 elapsed.
Notre Dame 10, Stanford 7
Whalen 40-yard field goal with 5:59 remaining.
Drive: 7 plays, 38 yards, 2:52 remaining.
Notre Dame 14, Stanford 10
Michael Floyd 10-yard pass from Clausen (Ruffer kick) with 46 seconds remaining.
Drive: 10 plays, 76 yards, 5:12 remaining.

Total yards

ND: 447
Stan: 496

rushing yards

ND: 107
Stan: 280

passing yards

ND: 340
Stan: 216

time of possession

ND: 24:44
Stan: 35:16

passing

Clausen 25-30-340 Luck 14-20-198

rushing

Hughes 13-77 Gerhart 29-205
Riddick 6-37 Taylor 12-105

Tate 10-201 Whalen 6-76
Floyd 6-85 Fleener 4-56

T he Observer • IRISH INSIDER

Tuesday, December 1, 2009
Jimmy Clausen threw for 340 yards and five touchdowns and Golden Tate caught 10 passes for 201 yards and three scores, but the Irish defense couldn’t slow Stanford’s Toby Gerhart, as the Cardinal prevailed 45-38.

Notre Dame held a 24-20 halftime lead and extended its advantage to 31-20 after its first drive of the second half ended with Michael Floyd’s second touchdown catch, but from there, Gerhart would run for two more touchdowns (after scoring one in the first half) and throw for one as well, as the Heisman hopeful rushed for 205 yards. Tate’s third touchdown grab — a 28-yarder in which he caught a short pass to the left and cut across the entire defense for a highlight-reel run — gave Notre Dame its final points with 12:56 to play, as the Irish led 38-30. But Gerhart’s touchdown pass and his third scoring run with a minute remaining cemented the game, as Clausen’s final Hail Mary try would fall incomplete as time expired.

For more photos, check out the photo gallery at ndsmcobserver.com

Clockwise from top: Junior wide receiver Golden Tate steps in the end zone for Notre Dame’s first touchdown, junior quarterback Jimmy Clausen warms up on the sidelines, junior linebacker Harrison Smith tries to make a tackle, Tate reacts after an incomplete pass, sophomore wide receiver Michael Floyd hauls in a touchdown pass from Clausen on a trick play.