HANDLING THE WORKLOAD

In his junior year, running back Cierre Wood is getting more carries — and making the most of every one.
**Commentary**

**Time for Irish to start winning by not losing**

“You can’t start winning until you stop losing…”

Thus Irish coach Brian Kelly summed up Notre Dame’s 23-20 loss to South Florida Saturday. It perfectly describes the situation in which the program finds itself. For the first time since Lou Holtz was roaming the sideline, the Irish have a proven winner leading the team. The defense has shown it can be dominant and is even more talented than last year’s squad, which suffocated opposing offenses, but the Irish have yet to take over the stretch en route to a 4-0 finish.

Saturday’s starting quarterback, sophomore Tommy Rees, has won games in Notre Dame Stadium before. But the Los Angeles Coliseum during his short career. He has a treasure chest of playmakers to get the ball to and an offensive line experienced enough to let him do exactly what he wants.

Rees is in a crossroads as they head to Michigan Stadium for the first-ever night game. As has been the case so many times during this rivalry’s history, both teams have much to lose.

Muffed punts can’t happen. 15-yard personal foul facemask penalties can’t happen — especially from a senior captain. Cocking only two red zone opportunities in six attempts and turning the ball over three times during this rivalry’s history, both teams have much to lose.

For Michigan, Brady Hoke is looking for a big, 6-foot-9, 330-pound kid. For Notre Dame, it is time for Irish to start winning until they stop losing.

When it is all said and done, Saturday, Notre Dame can’t start winning until they stop losing.

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

Contact Andrew Owens at aowens2@nd.edu

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**Football Recruiting**

**Irish target OT Zach Banner**

By ALLAN JOSEPH

Sports Editor

Notre Dame’s coaching staff will not be able to talk to any recruits this weekend per NCAA rules regarding recruiting during away weekends, but the Irish will be hoping to impress a big-time recruit nonetheless.

Washington offensive tackle Zach Banner will be in Ann Arbor to watch the first night game in Michigan Stadium history. Though Banner is on a visit to Michigan, Notre Dame is heavily recruiting him, Irish recruiting analyst Jason Sapp said.

“He’s a big-time offensive tackle out of Washington, and he actually plays basketball as well,” said Sapp, the football recruiting editor at Blue and Gold Illustrated. “He’s a high-fourth, 330-pound kid.”

Banner will visit Notre Dame for the USC game Oct. 22.

Sapp praised Notre Dame’s pursuit of high-quality defensive linemen, highlighted by the recent signing of New York City defensive tackle Jerron Jones.

“Notre Dame is a program that’s really done well on the defensive line,” Sapp said. “[Recently] there have been some great efforts, even comparable with some SEC schools.”

For Notre Dame commits — long snapper Scott Daly, safety John Turner, offensive tackle Taylor Decker and outside linebacker David Perkins — visited campus during Notre Dame’s season-opening loss to South Florida.

All of those issues will take care of themselves when the team starts winning and stops losing.

Now is the time to trust Kelly’s leadership in turning the momentum of this season in a positive direction.

This weekend’s match-up between No. 1 (Michigan) and No. 2 (Notre Dame) in all-time No. 1 against No. 2 (Notre Dame) in all-time No. 1 game at the Big House.

Then it happened again in 2008, 2010 and, now, in 2011, as neither team will be ranked in the top-25.

For Notre Dame, it is time to take care of themselves when the team starts winning and stops losing.

For Michigan, Brady Hoke is looking for a big, 6-foot-9, 330-pound kid.

Banner will visit Notre Dame for the USC game Oct. 22.

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Contact Andrew Owens at aowens2@nd.edu

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**CHICANITAS**

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**Saturday, September 10th, 2011: 4:00PM**

2:00PM: Margaret Morgan Grasselli, curator of Old Master drawings at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, will present a lecture in the Annenberg Auditorium.

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ndsmcobserver.com
All Wood needs is gloves

Irish junior running back Cierre Wood wastes no time showcasing his talents or his gloves

By DOUGLAS FARMER  Education in Chief

Early in the second quarter Saturday, Cierre Wood took a handoff, slipped past a few defenders, and romped 14 yards into the end zone. He then proudly displayed the gloves you see on the cover of this Insider to the Notre Dame Marching Band, oblivious to the penalty flag behind him which would negate the score.

“These gloves are nice,” Wood said of the accessories he has been raving about since their arrival in June. “Best thing Adidas has made so far.”

When Wood first saw the gloves in the Notre Dame locker room, he immediately tweeted a photo of himself showcasing the pattern which forms a complete leprechaun when his hands are held just right. In similar fashion, the junior wasted no time in showcasing his ability Saturday, in his first season for the California native.

Last season Wood started five of Notre Dame’s 13 games, using 119 carries to total 603 yards. Obviously, he is already well ahead of that pace this season. Aside from one hit, Wood insisted he woke up feeling fine Sunday morning.

“My neck was really hurting, other than that I was fine,” he said. “I was going over a guy, and started leaning, and he brushed past me, and I got a little whiplash effect.”

Aside from the tweaked neck — which in fact cut this interview short as Wood was whisked off to the trainers’ room for treatment — Wood said he was ready for even more in Notre Dame’s loss.

“I wanted to be in the game more as the game went on,” he said. “In the beginning I was a little tired, had to get my body used to going through so many plays at one time. But after the first drive, I was good to go. I wanted to get on the field as often as I could.”

Wood should be careful what he wishes for, as Molnar said he was ready for even more work in the offseason as far as the run game goes. Wood insisted he woke up feeling fine Sunday morning.

“I know what we’re capable of, I know what we can do. I know what we have done.”

Big duties at the Big House

Hitting the road, heading to the Michigan Stadium history, the Irish will need to silence the Wolverines’ crowd early or suffer the wrath of 109,000 fans.

“We worked really hard during the offseason as far as the run game goes,” Wood said. “I was always talking with the linemen, and asking them how they block this play, that play, making sure everything is correct.

“That way I can make sure my reads are correct. When I fit off them, everything is correct, make sure my footwork is correct. It’s a lot of hard work that got us to this point.”

And while some success has come, that hard work has not stopped.

“It was good, but it can get a lot better,” Wood said. “That’s what we’re doing. We’re working day-in, day-out to make the run game as good as possible.”

“I know we’re capable of, I know what we can do. I know what we have done.”

Wood insists he was ready for even more work in the offseason as far as the run game goes. Wood insisted he woke up feeling fine Sunday morning.

“I know what we’re capable of, I know what we can do. I know what we have done.”

Junior running back Cierre Wood runs the ball during the second half of Notre Dame’s 23-20 loss to South Florida on Sept. 3.

Contact Douglas Farmer at dfarmer@nd.edu

Junior running back Cierre Wood runs the ball during the second half of Notre Dame’s 23-20 loss to South Florida on Sept. 23. Wood had a career-high 104 yards against the Bulls.

Senior running back Cierre Wood was the outright starter at Notre Dame’s 23-20 loss to South Florida on Sept. 3.

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Friday, September 9, 2011
On the one hand, the Irish are the superior team. Notre Dame has more talent and is vastly improved from a year ago (especially on the defensive side of the ball), while the Wolverines are under a first-year coach and aren’t a huge threat beyond Denard Robinson.

On the other hand, there is no evidence the Irish can avoid repeating last week’s mistakes. If the Michigan defense places eight men in the box to stop the run, Rees will connect if the Michigan defense places eight men in the box to stop the run, Rees will connect...
Michigan Defense

CB
8  J.T. Floyd  Sr.
5  Courtney Avery  So.

OLB
4  Cam Gordon  Jr.
90 Jake Ryan  Sr.

DE
88 Craig Roh  Jr.
85 Mike Martin  Sr.
73 Will Campbell  Jr.
76 Quinton Washington  Jr.
39 Will Heininger  Sr.
67 Nathan Brink  Jr.

DT
55 Jihad Black  Sr.
53 Ryan Van Bergen  Sr.

DT
63 Rocko Khoury  Sr.
50 David Molk  Sr.

TE
88 Blake Countess  Fr.
29 Troy Woolfolk  Sr.
18 Blake Countess  Fr.

Michigan Offense

WR
12 Roy Roundtree  Sr.
19 Evan Fields  Sr.

TE
86 Kevin Koger  Sr.
72 Mark Huyge  Jr.
65 Patrick Omameh  Sr.

RT
72 Michael Schofield  Jr.

RG
65 Elliott Mealer  Sr.

C
50 David Molk  Sr.
64 Nick Khoury  So.

LG
52 Ricky Barnum  Sr.
57 Elliott Mealer  Sr.

LT
77 Taylor Lewan  Jr.
97 Michael Schofield  Jr.

WR
21 Cierre Wood  Jr.
30 Jeremy Gallon  Jr.

UM PASSING
Michigan suffered a blow to their receiving corps when Darrelle Stinson was suspended for the season for his second DUI arrest, but the Wolverines returned plenty of playmakers in the receiving game. Junior receiver Roy Roundtree led the Wolverines in receiving last year, hauling in 72 passes for 935 yards and seven touchdowns, and the playmaker is expected to lead the way for Michigan again in 2011. He is complemented by senior receiver Junior Hemingway, who caught 32 passes for 593 yards and four touchdowns to lead the way in 2010. Junior quarterback Denard Robinson threw for 244 yards and a touchdown in last year’s 28-24 win at Notre Dame Stadium, but he is learning a new offense in Wolverines coach Brady Hoke’s first season. He threw for only 98 yards and no touchdowns in Michigan’s 34-10 rain-shortened victory over Western Michigan.

The Irish will depend on their safeties to keep Roundtree from returning plays and making many plays in the vertical passing game. The secondary as a whole will have their hands full with a talented Michigan aerial attack.

IRISH INSIDER

Under past coaching regimes, it’s safe to say nobody saw last week’s performance coming. Five turnovers — three inside the 5-yard line — doomed the Irish in the opener. Under past coaching regimes, Notre Dame would follow up a mediocre effort, but it won’t happen with this coach or this team. Tommy Rees will play with poise, manage the game and make some key throws when needed — and that is all the team will need him to do. Cierre Wood will approach 200 rushing yards against an improving defense that lacks speed and talent and Theo Riddick will bounce back to help the Irish top the Wolverines in Ann Arbor for the first time since 2005.

Andrea Owens
Associate Sports Editor

UM SPECIAL TEAMS
Kicker Brendan Gillons converted 1 of 4 field goals in last week’s game. Last year, punter Matt Wile was rated very highly coming out of high school, but this will be his first test on a grand stage. Michigan specialists have proven to be a weak point for Michigan again in 2011. He is complemented by senior receiver Junior Hemingway, who caught 32 passes for 593 yards and four touchdowns to lead the way in 2010. Junior quarterback Denard Robinson threw for 244 yards and a touchdown in last year’s 28-24 win at Notre Dame Stadium, but he is learning a new offense in Wolverines coach Brady Hoke’s first season. He threw for only 98 yards and no touchdowns in Michigan’s 34-10 rain-shortened victory over Western Michigan.

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UM OFFENSIVE COACHING
Michigan has several talented rushers on its team, the most explosive of which also happens to be their quarterback. Junior Denard Robinson rushed the Irish for 258 yards on 28 carries in last year’s 28-24 Wolverine victory. His 87-yard touchdown run with 1:51 remaining in the first half was the longest run in Notre Dame Stadium history, and his two-yard score with 27 seconds remaining sealed the Michigan victory. Senior running back Michael Shaw scored nine touchdowns last season, but this year he is sharing time in the backfield with sophomore Fitzgerald Toussaint, who rushed 11 times for 80 yards and two touchdowns in Michigan’s 34-10 win over Western Michigan.

The Irish defense held speedy South Florida quarterback B.J. Daniels and running back Demetrius Murray in check Saturday, which is especially impressive considering the Bulls led most of the day and were trying to chew the clock. Irish junior linebacker Manti Te’o led Notre Dame with nine tackles, including one for loss. Senior linebacker Darius Fleming and senior defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore contained the edge with eight tackles each and a combined two for loss.

UM RUSHING
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UM SCHEDULE
Sept. 3 Western Michigan (W, 34-10)
Sept. 10 Notre Dame
Sept. 17 Eastern Michigan
Sept. 24 San Diego State
Oct. 1 Minnesota
Oct. 8 Indiana
Oct. 15 @Michigan State
Oct. 29 Purdue
Nov. 5 Iowa
Nov. 12 @Illinois
Nov. 19 Nebraska
Nov. 26 Ohio State

Irish Hockey Coach

Jeff Jackson
Irish Hockey Coach

“Wolverines are known by drivers to have poor night vision.”
Robinson adjusts to new offense under Brady Hoke

By ANDREW OWENS
Associate Sports Editor

In his inaugural season as Michigan coach, Brady Hoke is relying on junior quarterback Denard Robinson to display some of the explosiveness that transformed the undersized quarterback into a Heisman candidate last September, due in large part to his performance at Notre Dame Stadium in a 28-24 Michigan victory.

“They have another player detached,” Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco said. “You have to respect that. It’s not like Wildcat — there is a loose player who can throw the ball … You kind of feel like they have 12 [players].”

Diaco learned firsthand just how dangerous a quarterback like Robinson can be when the Irish defense allowed 502 yards of total offense to the Michigan signal-caller in 2010, including the longest run in Notre Dame Stadium history, an 87-yard scamper that gave the Wolverines a 21-7 lead just before halftime.

Robinson’s challenge this season has been adjusting to a new offense — a pro-style system, compared to the spread that Robinson thrived in last year. In Michigan’s rain-shortened 34-10 win over Western Michigan Saturday, Robinson completed 9-of-13 passes for 98 yards and carried the ball eight times for 46 yards, tame numbers compared to what he was regularly posting last year.

Despite the numbers, Hoke said he felt Robinson had a strong grasp of the offense in the win.

“I thought he made good decisions,” Hoke said. “He threw the ball well. It was good to see some vertical runs by [running backs] Fitz Toussaint and Michael [Shaw] when he was in there.

“But I thought he felt comfortable. I thought his timing on — I think there was an out to the field to [Jeremy] Gallon that was well-timed and well-thrown.”

Irish coach Brian Kelly said Robinson is just as much of a big-play threat this year as he was in 2010.

“They have kept a lot of similar principles for Denard Robinson to have the ball in his hands,” he said. “So there are some things we can build off from last year and certainly it was the big plays that hurt us. Minimizing the big plays and clearly knowing that he has elite speed, we obviously have to slow him down.”

For Hoke, the game will mark the first true test of his Michigan coaching career. It will not, however, be the first time he has experienced the rivalry, as he served as Michigan’s defensive ends coach and then defensive line coach before taking head coaching jobs at Ball State and San Diego State.

“This is a great rivalry game and one that we’re excited about,” Hoke said. “Obviously, there are some other things that go along with this game this year with playing at night, the first night game, and the throw back uniforms and all those things.”

Diaco said the change in lead-
IRISH INSIDER

By CHRISTOPHER MASOUD
Assistant Managing Editor

One of the more closely watched contests within the larger game, the battle of the trenches generally provides an indication of which team has taken control of momentum and, often times, the lead. As such, Irish coach Brian Kelly has maintained that he will be closely monitoring that battle on both sides of the ball.

While sophomore quarterback Tommy Rees’ success depends on the protection the offensive line can provide, the outcome of Notre Dame’s first road game of the season against Michigan rides largely on the defensive line’s ability to contain the Wolverines’ premier talent, junior quarterback Denard Robinson.

Anchored by junior nose guard Sean Cwynar and senior defensive ends Kapron Lewis-Moore and Ethan Johnson, the Irish line has prepared extensively for the number of offensive formations, schemes and run-options first-year Michigan coach Brady Hoke could include in his playbook.

“All of those things have to be part of your defensive preparation,” Kelly said. “We’ve been accustomed to having that within our defensive game plan because of last year, but we spent obviously a great deal of time in making sure we have answers to defend the run portion of a quarterback.”

Notre Dame faced a number of dual-threat quarterbacks last season, but none were more talented than Robinson, who tallied 502 yards of total offense in the Wolverines’ 28-24 victory.

Despite the limited success against Robinson last season, Kelly maintains the experience will pay dividends heading into Saturday’s game. More importantly, the Irish roster features a number of players capable of filling the void in the trenches, including sophomore nose guard Louis Nix.

“Nix has been very consistent in his approach, and we’ve got to know Louis a lot better as a staff,” Kelly said. “We know when to push him, we know when to back off. What he’s brought to our attention is that he can be that consistent guy day-in and day-out.”

Nix recorded seven tackles, in addition to forcing Bulls quarterback B.J. Daniels out of the pocket on a number of occasions, during Saturday’s loss to South Florida. Junior linebacker Manti Te’o credits the entire second line of freshmen Aaron Lynch and Stephon Tuitt, and Nix in particular, for providing support in key situations.

“I thought they did pretty well, especially Louis,” Te’o said. “Louis did a real good job in there, he was in on a lot of plays and he was the first one to the ball in some cases. He definitely played real hard, and he played real well. The other two did a good job as well. It was definitely nice to see [them] out there getting some reps.”

An early enrollee last spring, Lynch tallied seven tackles, five unassisted, in the annual Blue-Gold scrimmage April 16. Lynch recorded one tackle in limited action last Saturday against the Bulls.

“I know I’m ready to play because the coaches have developed me,” he said last week. “I don’t think I’m 100 percent ready to play yet, but I know I’m ready to help out the team.”

Although Tuitt first stepped foot on Notre Dame’s campus as a player this summer, he credits the mentorship of Lewis-Moore and Johnson for putting him in a position to factor into the defensive rotation.

“Right now things are going well,” Tuitt said last week. “At first it was kind of rough because we had to adjust to the new system. [Our development] is due to the great coaching staff and the great leadership of the defensive line, and due to that help we’re able to move on and become better players on the field and off the field.”

Despite the hype surrounding Saturday’s contest as the first night game in Michigan Stadium, the unique atmosphere only adds to the defense’s challenge of containing Robinson for 60 minutes.

“Whenever you have an athlete like Denard, it’s going to be a good challenge, so I’m definitely looking forward to it.”

Contact Christopher Masoud at cmasoud@nd.edu

DAN FOX

Junior
Rocky River, OH
St. Ignatius
6-3 / 240 lbs
Outside Linebacker

Led by the line, defense prepares to contain Robinson

By CHRISTOPHER MASOUD
Assistant Managing Editor

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Contact Christopher Masoud at cmasoud@nd.edu

Irish defensive linemen Louis Nix, left, and Ethan Johnson pursue a South Florida ballcarrier during Notre Dame’s 23-20 loss to the Bulls on Sept. 3.
Memorial Mass
Marking the 10th Anniversary of September 11, 2001
Co-sponsored by the Office of the President, the Office of Campus Ministry, Student Government, and the Office of Student Activities

Hesburgh Library Quadrangle
Sunday, September 11, 2011
7:30 pm
Rain site: Purcell Pavilion, Joyce Athletic and Convocation Center
Candlelight procession following to the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes