By ANDREW OWENS
Associate Sports Editor

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — For the first time this season, Notre Dame did not commit any turnovers, allowing the Irish to roll to a 38-10 win over Purdue.

“I don’t know that it’s a sign of relief as much as we have a way we need to play the game if we’re going to be successful and we said that since day one — making good decisions and bringing it hard,” Irish coach Brian Kelly said.

The Irish (3-2) did not waste any time shifting momentum to their advantage after senior cornerback Gary Gray intercepted a pass on the first play from scrimmage. On Notre Dame’s second play, sophomore quarterback Tommy Rees connected with senior receiver Michael Floyd for a 35-yard touchdown to put the Irish ahead.

“Obviously on the road against a Big Ten team … getting Michael Floyd the ball early on really gave us a lot of confidence offensively,” Kelly said. Only a week earlier in Notre Dame’s 36-12 win over Pittsburgh on Sept. 24, the Panthers held Floyd to four catches and 27 yards, forcing Rees to distribute the ball to other receivers.

“I think more of a concerted effort,” said Floyd, who finished the game with 137 receiving yards on 12 receptions and the first-quarter touchdown that put Purdue on the board.

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Floyd said he noticed some improvements from his sophomore signal-caller besides simply not turning the ball over.

“I saw some really good things [from Rees],” he said. “On the last touchdown he threw where he started his progression with Mike Floyd on an individual route and worked his way back to his fourth receiver. I told him … those are the signs I’m looking for.”

Yet, the development is a work in progress.

“Then he goes and misses a wide open receiver in the end zone and we have the conversation that we need to be consistent,” Notre Dame’s running back tandem of junior Cierre Wood and senior Jonas Gray powered an Irish rushing attack that gashed the Boilermaker defense for 287 yards, the most for the program in eight years.

“Our running game setup everything we did today,” Kelly said. “I thought physically our backs, Jonas Gray and Cierre Wood, really asserted their will on Purdue today. Playing that way gives them a confidence that there’s no reason the ball should be on the ground.”

Irish freshman defensive end Stephon Tuitt did not travel for the game and will be evaluated mid-week before the team makes a decision on his status for Saturday’s home game against Air Force.

“We were short-handed, so consequently we needed [sophomore defensive end] Kona [Schenke] to come in and play with us and he did a nice job with very little rep work,” Kelly said. “I told our defense that it’s not pity time when you go in there. It’s not acceptable to go in there and not play good defense. You’re getting coached, you’re getting reps, it’s one area when those guys get in there they played at a level that I believe all of our defensive players can play to.”

The Irish defense held Purdue to 84 rushing yards in another stifling performance.

“Defensively it’s been very similar week after week, making it difficult for teams to run the football,” Irish coach Brian Kelly said.

“We haven’t arrived,” he said. “I don’t like the fact we had 30-something first downs and didn’t match it in points. We missed some opportunities in close games, missing an easy field goal and not being able to score seven. Those concern me a little bit, but we played well today and I’m not going to sound like sour milk. We have to put more points on the board.”

Contact Andrew Owens at aowens2@nd.edu

quote of the game

“(Coach Kelly) told us we had to be good in all three phases of the game, and that’s what we did today.”

Jonas Gray
Notre Dame running back

play of the game

Notre Dame running back Cierre Wood runs past a Purdue defender on his way to a 55-yard touchdown run in the second quarter.

Wood had a career-high 191 rushing yards on just 20 carries, earning an average of 9.6 yards per carry.

In the first quarter, senior running back Dayne Crist replaced junior Cierre Wood on Purdue’s 2nd drive when, following a Gary Gray interception, Floyd scored on the game’s third play from scrimmage.

Cierre Wood
Notre Dame running back

player of the game

Notre Dame averaged 7.2 yards per carry, highlighted by Wood’s 9.6 yards per rush and Jonas Gray’s 6.3 yards per carry.

Michael Floyd’s 35-yard touchdown catch in the first quarter

The Irish set the tone for the game early when, following a Gary Gray interception, Floyd scored on the game’s third play from scrimmage.

stat of the game

7.2 yards per rush

Cierre Wood
Notre Dame running back

With his offensive line opening up gaping holes, Wood galloped to a career-high 191 rushing yards on just 20 carries.
For the first time in five games, the Notre Dame defense has still only allowed a close game against Purdue, but has trouble using that talent as well as it should. Turnovers plagued the season and are the only thing standing between the Irish and a perfect record. They clearly have the capability to play like they did against Purdue. That doesn’t mean they need to beat every team 38-10, but that level of execution is what should be expected.

It’s time to end the parody. It’s time to let teams like Pittsburgh hang around. Purdue provides a solid recipe for success for the rest of the season. Tommy Rees is not going to win games on his own for Notre Dame, so the offense needs to start with the running game. Cierre Wood and Jonas Gray are running hard and seeing the field incredibly well — they have to be a main focus of the Irish offense moving forward.

But the top option has to be Michael Floyd, just as he was against the Boilermakers. He is almost always the best, most athletic and most dangerous player on the field.

Notre Dame is a very talented team, but has trouble using that talent as well as it should. Turnovers plagued the season and are the only thing standing between the Irish and a perfect record. They clearly have the capability to play like they did against Purdue. That doesn’t mean they need to beat every team 38-10, but that level of execution is what should be expected.

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Wood runs roughshod over Purdue

By ERIC PRISTER
Senior Sports Writer

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Irish sophomore running back Cierre Wood did not receive his first carry until the 4:15 mark in the first quarter on Saturday, 38-10 victory over Purdue. He took the handoff from sophomore quarterback Tommy Rees and scampered 19 yards for the first down.

And that was just the beginning.

Wood carried the ball 19 more times, finishing the game with 191 yards on 20 carries, most of which he credited to his offensive line.

“My line just opened up everything — it was a free-for-all out there,” he said. “We were moving the ball exceptionally well. I just ran off their blocks and it’s just a speed boost after that.”

Wood’s 191 rushing yards from scrimmage, a career high, were the most for an Irish back since Julius Jones ran for 218 yards at Stanford in 2003.

It felt great,” Wood said. “We all talk about ‘just another day in the office.’ I need to give a big shout out to our offensive line — it wouldn’t have been possible without them. They opened up the holes, and I just ran in there perfectly and just got the yardage.”

Despite not receiving a touch in the first 10 minutes of the game, Wood ran for 101 yards in the first half, the most for an Irish back since Julius Jones in the 2004-05 season, dating back to the 2004-05 season. Jones ran for 101 yards against Army in 1974. It was the school record set against Army in 1974. It was the most yards that a player garnered since moving to West Lafayette.

Wood’s longest run of the day came midway through the second quarter, when he took a Rees handoff 55 yards for a touchdown.

“I think on the road, it’s really important to get off to a fast start,” Irish coach Brian Kelly said. “You take the crowd out of it and you want to be the first one on the board and dictate the tempo of the game.”

The Irish picked up 34 first downs, two shy of the school record set against Army in 1974. It was the most they garnered since moving to West Lafayette.

Wood ran for 101 yards in the first half, the best half of his career and his third 100-yard rushing game of the season.

“We just got rolling early, and we kept it going from there,” Wood said. “Our momentum was built up, and it never came down. Blocks were being read correctly, and we opened up everything.”

The Irish offense was clicking on all cylinders, racking up 551 yards in total offense, something Irish coach Brian Kelly said all started with the running game.

Wood said Notre Dame came into the game prepared to run the football, especially to the outside edge of the Purdue defense.

“We got the ball to the outside edges! was the plan coming in, but I like it, it’s all about reading the blocks and taking what the defense gives you,” he said. “I took everything I was like a kid eating candy out there. Whatever they gave me, that was what I was going to take. It feels good to see so much open space.”

“You just have to work on your moves, have to make the first person miss. But that’s what we’re here for — we’re football players.”

Wood’s longest run of the day came midway through the second quarter, when he took a Rees handoff 55 yards for a touchdown.

“Everything we did today,” Kelly said. “We have to be more consistent with our running game,” Rees said. “We were moving the ball exceptionally well. I just ran off their blocks and it’s just a speed boost after that.”

“He has to touch the ball for the rest of the season, and everybody’s eyes will start to open.”

Contact Eric Prister at eprister@nd.edu

By ANDREW OWENS
Associate Sports Editor

Irish dominate Purdue on ground

Notre Dame’s 289 rushing yards were the most since accumulating 330 at Stanford on Nov. 29, 2003. “Our running game set up everything we did today,” Kelly said. “When you run the ball effectively, you can play well.”

Ford sets another record

Irish senior receiver Michael Floyd took possession of another Notre Dame career receiving mark with the 16th 100-yard receiving game of his career. Golden Tate held the previous mark with 15.

“I made a more concerted effort to make him part of the game plan,” Kelly said. “He has to touch the ball and the offense has to come to him.”

Rees strikes again

Irish sophomore quarterback Tommy Rees threw a touchdown in his 10th consecutive game, the third-most in Notre Dame history. Brady Quinn holds the all-time mark, dating back to the 2004-05 seasons when he recorded a touchdown pass in 16 consecutive games.

The strike came on the second offensive play of the game, a 35-yard touchdown pass to Floyd, silencing the home crowd.

“It’s great getting out to an early lead,” Rees said. “Getting the first strike kind of killed some of the momentum they had coming into the game — a lively night game with a home crowd and getting an early strike kind of helps push away some of that momentum.”

Contact Andrew Owens at aowens20@nd.edu

scoring summary

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First quarter
Notre Dame 7, Purdue 0
Michael Floyd 35-ya pass from Tommy Rees (David Ruffer kick) with 14:36 remaining
Drive: 2 plays, 35 yards, 0:10 elapsed

Notre Dame 14, Purdue 0
Jonas Gray 2-ya run (David Ruffer kick) with 0:03 remaining
Drive: 13 plays, 82 yards, 4:12 elapsed

Second quarter
Notre Dame 21, Purdue 0
Cierre Wood 55-ya run (David Ruffer kick) with 9:06 remaining
Drive: 3 plays, 79 yards, 1:03 elapsed

Notre Dame 21, Purdue 3
Carson Wiggs 27-ya field goal with 3:39 remaining
Drive: 14 plays, 70 yards, 5:27 elapsed

Third quarter
Notre Dame 28, Purdue 3
Tyler Eifert 6-ya pass from Tommy Rees (David Ruffer kick) with 2:07 remaining
Drive: 7 plays, 69 yards, 3:00 elapsed

Notre Dame 35, Purdue 3
T.J. Jones 11-ya pass from Tommy Rees (David Ruffer kick) with 2:07 remaining
Drive: 12 plays, 87 yards, 4:45 elapsed

Fourth quarter
Notre Dame 38, Purdue 3
David Ruffer 21-ya field goal with 8:06 remaining
Drive: 16 plays, 70 yards, 7:34 elapsed

Notre Dame 38, Purdue 10
Antavian Edison 13-ya pass from Caleb TerBush (Carson Wiggs kick) with 0:21 remaining
Drive: 11 plays, 95 yards, 3:50 elapsed

statistics

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rushing yards
ND  289
PU  0

passing yards
ND  0
PU  0

time of possession
ND  33:11
PU  26:49

rushing
Wood  20-191  Hunt  8-42  Ruffer  4-25

receiving
Floyd  12-137  Edison  5-49  Siller  8-25

field goals
Ruffer  1-3  Harper  1-2
Never in doubt

Gary Gray intercepted a Caleb TerBush pass on the first play from scrimmage. Michael Floyd scored a touchdown two plays later and Notre Dame never looked back in blowing by Purdue 38-10 in Ross-Ade Stadium. Cierre Wood had a career day on the ground, racking up 191 yards on 20 carries, while fellow running back Jonas Gray added 94 yards of his own. While the Irish special teams continued to struggle, it was never a problem, as Purdue simply could not compete with the more talented Irish. Only the Boilermakers’ last-minute touchdown kept the score from looking like the blowout it actually was.