FACING THE PRESENT

Junior linebacker Manti Te’o approaches life one day at a time and inspires those around him.
Irish move on from loss as Orlando awaits them

To the weathered and long-time Notre Dame fan, it may seem now that the thundercloud that has seemingly hovered over the program for the past 18 months is no easy task. Because of smoke-and-mirrors for quite a while is no easy program that has struggled might think.

The way the team responds to the USC loss this weekend and down the stretch will show a lot about its character and motivation, especially now that “their gift bag won’t be as big,” as Kelly said.

With the goal of a BCS berth now out of reach, the Irish have as strong an idea of where they will be over the holidays as they have had in a while. If things finish 7-5, 8-4 or 9-3, the result is almost assuredly the same — the Champs Sports Bowl. Kelly’s irishsportsdaily.com in Orlando on Dec. 29.

Kelly said the approach will remain the same even with the BCS bid off the table. “So the moment for us, it never gets too big,” he said after the loss Saturday. “In other words, we didn’t think in big-picture terms. I’ll talk to [the media] in big-picture terms.”

While in no way should the team scrap the remainder of the 2011 season to improve its chances in 2012, the final five games will provide the Irish coaches the opportunity to evaluate much of his young talent.

With senior defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore out for the season, freshmen Aaron Lynch, Stephan Tuitt and Chase Hounshell have to mature even quicker and will play a larger role on Saturdays.

Sophomore quarterback Andrew Hendrix should get an extended look in the last five games, experience that could prove invaluable in 2012. With next year’s schedule about as daunting as it comes, Hendrix will need all the game repetitions he can get before being thrown into the fire, regardless of what his rule proves to be.

It’s time for the online message boards to settle down and trust the plan that Kelly and his staff have put in place.

As former Irish coach Lou Holtz once said, “You’re never as good as everyone tells you when you win, and you’re never as bad as they say when you lose.”

And, right now, Notre Dame is in between good and bad. Time will tell if the thundercloud is ready to move along.

Follow our Notre Dame sports blog via:

ndsmcobserver.com

**FOOTBALL RECRUITING**

Recruits leave ND impressed

By ALLAN JOSEPH

Sports Editor

A week after hosting its largest group of visiting recruits in recent memory, Notre Dame will host no official visitors this weekend. While recruiting expert Mike Frank said that while a number of 2013 players will make unofficial visits to campus, the focus on the 2012 signing class is still largely on the aftermath of last week’s bananza of visitors — and Notre Dame seems to have done well.

“I think a lot of guys came out impressed,” said Frank, who runs the ESPN affiliate Irish Sports Daily. “Notre Dame put their best foot forward as far as the game atmosphere goes.

“I think the player walk is a huge thing for these kids. They get how much Notre Dame football means to Notre Dame fans when they walk down the street and all the fans are screaming at them, trying to get them ready for the game. Those types of things have a huge impact on these players.”

While the atmosphere impressed a number of recruits, Frank said the result of the game often plays a large role in a recruit’s decision.

“I do think the game is important, more important than people realize,” Frank said. “How you stack up against USC is important to the (California) players. They’re leaving all the way from Southern California and come to South Bend, and I think they want to know that Notre Dame is going to be competitive with them.

“Most of these kids don’t want to play on a losing team.”

While the Irish may have lost to the Trojans, Frank said the loss presents unique recruiting opportunities of its own.

“They can go up to these guys and say ‘You’re the missing piece that gets us over this hump,’” Frank said. “I’m sure that’s the angle they took, and that’s really the truth. They’re just a few players away from being a very good team.”

“Some kids want to be a part of building a winning team, which Notre Dame certainly has that opportunity to sell.”

While Notre Dame may have sold a number of undecided players last weekend, Frank said it was too early to tell which players they may have been.

“I don’t think we’ll really know for sure until a couple of weeks down the road,” Frank said.

“None of these players are probably going to decide right away and so when you’re really going to know how Notre Dame did is a couple weeks down the road when these players are visiting other schools and checking out other schools.”

“If Notre Dame’s still high on their list after a couple more visits, then you have a pretty good idea of how well Notre Dame did. I don’t anticipate anybody committing anytime soon.”

Speculation swirled this week around California defensive back Tee Shepard, who has committed to Notre Dame and planned on enrolling early. There appears to have been a misconception between Shepard and the Notre Dame administration, but the issue appears to have been cleared up between the University and the high school senior. While some suggested Shepard would decommit if he could not enroll early, Frank said it was far too early for that speculation.

“I just think some things need to be clarified and I think that’s all being worked out,” Frank said. “I don’t know where the mix-up was or why it happened, whether there was a miscommunication or what the situation was, but I think right now that it is a situation that will be resolved one way or another. He’s not decommitted at this point.”

Shepard reaffirmed his commitment to Notre Dame via his Twitter account Tuesday evening.

After a whirlwind week of recruiting, Frank said the most important thing to remember is that with months before National Signing Day, much is still up in the air.

“Recruiting is always a roller-coaster ride,” Frank said. “This time last year Notre Dame had dropped a couple games and it seemed like the wheels were falling off. Then they got back on the winning streak and then next thing you know, they close recruiting strong. So no matter what happens between now and the end of the season, all this stuff can change. We’ll just have to see how Notre Dame closes their season.”

“I think a lot of recruits, especially the top-lot, the top recruits are taking a wait-and-see approach to Notre Dame to see which direction they’re heading. I think by the end of the year you’ll see them finish the season strong.”

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out Mike Frank’s irishsportsdaily.com. Email Mike at mikefrank18@sbcglobal.net and tell him The Observer sent you.

Contact Allan Joseph at ajoseph2@nd.edu
By ANDREW OWENS
Associate Sports Editor

Each Saturday in the Notre Dame locker room, a warrior applies eye black to his face and quietly envisions his role in the battle that is about to ensue. If Manti Te’o seems contemplative, it’s because he is—in everything he does.

“When I’m preparing, I have a general idea of what plays they’re going to run, where it’s going to go, who’s going to get it by just the way they line up, and that comes from my film study and really helps me.”

“[Defensive coordinator] Bob Diaco and [safeties coach Chuck] Martin have especially helped me with that film study and cleaning up what I look at and focusing my attention on certain things so I can apply it.”

Te’o’s impact on the program is not limited to his on-field performance on Saturdays. He is the caliber of player who ignites a program, and Notre Dame was in desperate need of a defensive jewel to complete its 2009 recruiting class when Te’o committed to the Irish.

“So we could have lost Manti Te’o in terms of the football player,” Irish coach Brian Kelly said.

“What we would have never overcome is the leader that he is. So when people talk about the complete package, it’s that he carries that same pride with him in everything that he does. And that’s what he brings to our football program and that’s why there’s never a day that he’s not looking to be better. And I think it’s the pride that drives that.”

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If Manti Te’o seems to be the player he is to others including Diaco, Te’o attributed his character to his roots.

“It’s definitely humbling and it definitely goes to show that my parents raised me the right way,” he said. “And I just hope to pass that on to people I come in contact with and for them to realize that wherever you go, whoever you meet, you never know what kind of impact you might have on them.”

Learning from the best to be the best

Te’o was named a semifinalist for the Dick Butkus Award, given annually to college football’s top linebacker. While he is a standout at the position, he studies the best at the professional level to pick up on characteristics he can add to his performance.

As far as collegiate linebackers go, everyone’s different,” Te’o said. “I don’t pay too much attention to that, my teammates tend to do that for me. For me I focus on who’s the best overall and to me that’s Ray Lewis, Patrick Willis, Dick Butkus, all of them.”

So I try to mimic my game after them and watch them all the time. If I’m watching any linebackers and keeping track of linebackers, it’s them.”

By learning from others while inspiring others, Te’o serves as one of the nation’s best.

A calm before the storm

Irish junior linebacker Manti Te’o attempts to tackle an Air Force ball carrier Oct. 8 at Notre Dame Stadium. The Irish won, 59-33.

“I just try to relax. I feel whenever I try to focus too much and get too psyched for the game it hinders me a bit and doesn’t allow me to just play, so I’m rather loose, but still very calm.”

A calm before the storm, really. Te’o has recorded 69 tackles, eight-and-a-half for loss and four sacks in the first seven contests of the year, all team-highs. The No. 1 defensive prospect coming out of high school who chose Notre Dame over USC has done nothing to disappoint his family.

“[Defensive coordinator] Diaco has really been a defensive figure at college, it’s that he carries that same pride with him in everything that he does. And that’s what he brings to our football program and that’s why there’s never a day that he’s not looking to be better. And I think it’s the pride that drives that.”

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IRISH PASSING
After an explosive effort against Air Force, junior quarterback Tommy Rees and the Notre Dame offense took a step backward under the lights last weekend against USC.

Rees struggled to find senior receiver Michael Floyd and only junior tight end Tyler Eifert was able to pick up the slack. The passing game showed signs of life but never found a clear rhythm.

On the other side of the ball, Navy has a mediocre pass defense, ranking 61st in the country and allowing its opponents an average of over 275 yards through the air per game. Even worse, the Midshipmen rank 111th in the country in defensive efficiency.

Notre Dame has also occasion-
ally shown an ill-timed propensity for interceptions as each of the three losses the Irish have suffered was marked by turnovers. Navy has demonstrated a capability to force turnovers whenever its opponent plays sloppy. This matchup comes down to whether Rees makes good decisions. If he does, he will find open receivers.

EDG: NOTRE DAME

IRISH RUSHING
Notre Dame struggled might-
ily last weekend against USC, managing just 41 rushing yards in the entire game. Part of the low total was due to playcalling, but a large part of it was simply due to a strong performance by the Trojan defensive line, which smothered nearly every Notre Dame run that wasn’t around the edge.

Navy is no USC. The Midship-
men rank 103rd in the country in rushing defense, allowing just under 200 rushing yards per game. While Navy junior defensive end Jabaree Tuani has recorded 15.5 tackles for loss this season, the rest of the Midshipmen front seven is not nearly as stout as the Trojan defense.

Junior running back Cierre Wood and senior running back Jonas Gray should be able to find some running room against Navy. That will be crucial as Notre Dame looks to pick up the slack. The Irish with little time to be inefficient, which hurt the Irish in last year’s defeat.

EDG: NOTRE DAME

IRISH SPECIAL TEAMS
Notre Dame’s special teams have come a long way from the beginning of the year, when the Irish were making mistakes left and right. Ben Turk is finally punting consistently — though not quite as long as the coaches may want — and Kyle Brindza is a weapon in kickoffs.

Punt returns may be an area of weakness, but getting Michael Floyd involved in that facet of the game seems to have improved John Goodman’s hands as well. By this point, every Irish fan knows about George Atkinson, as kick returns. The electric freshman from Notre Dame is a threat to return the kicks, and when he doesn’t take it all the way back, he gets good field position for the offense.

EDG: NOTRE DAME

IRISH OFFENSIVE COACHING
The coaches have a tall task in getting Notre Dame emotion-
ally and mentally ready for last week’s night game specta-
cle. If the Irish can put together a strong first quarter, they will be in good position.

Navy has struggled in the first quarter, going four games with-much to try and control the clock, as Jonas Gray should be able to find some running room against Navy. That will be crucial as Notre Dame looks to pick up the slack. The Irish with little time to be inefficient, which hurt the Irish in last year’s defeat.

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EDG: NOTRE DAME

Notre Dame Defense

Catchphrase: All areas of the game are important. But on defense, the Irish need to focus on containing Navy’s running attack.

Frankston is a strong running back who has been productive for the Midshipmen, but he does not have the same type of explosive ability as the Irish’s Jonas Gray.

Notre Dame’s defense was out-
matched and out-manned against USC. Now both starting defensive ends, one of the most crucial po-
positions in stopping the option, are hampered by injuries. The Irish had significant problems stopping the option against the Midshipmen last year, and did not fair particu-
larly well against Air Force’s simi-
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But Navy is not a team that can come from behind. And if Notre Dame’s offensive weapons — namely Mi-
chael Floyd and Cierre Wood — who are severe mis-
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Expect a high-scoring game, but the Irish will bounce back and come out on top.
After dominating Navy without suffering a single defeat for nearly a half-century, Notre Dame has lost three of its last four against the Midshipmen, including two in Notre Dame Stadium.

Last year, Navy flummoxed Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco with its triple-option. Even with out quarterback Kriss Proctor, the Midshipmen still have a solid chance of winning their third consecutive road matchup against the Irish.

Notre Dame needs to jump ahead early and take advantage of opportunities on offense, as it did against Air Force.

After being irrelevant in the 31-17 loss to USC, Michael Floyd will torch the Navy secondary on the way to a win.

**NAVY OFFENSIVE COACHING**

The Midshipmen are one of the smartest teams in the country, committing very few penalties and turnovers. In addition, Navy boasts a squad skilled at executing its complex schemes.

In last year’s meeting between these two teams, Navy coach Ken Niumatalolo outcoached Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco. Don’t think either coach has forgotten.

**NAVY RUSHING**

It’s pretty simple: Navy is a nightmare on the ground. The Midshipmen triple-option attack is very effective, and it allows Navy to compete against teams far bigger and faster. Fullback Alexander Teich had a field day last year against the Irish and has only gotten more dangerous this year. As a whole, the Midshipmen rushing attack ranks third in the country and averages 325 yards on the ground per game.

Defending the triple option requires discipline, especially at the defensive end and outside linebacker positions. Senior defensive end Kapron Lewis-Moore will be sorely missed, as the Irish will rotate a number of inexperienced freshmen in his place. Notre Dame struggled to defend Air Force’s triple option on the ground earlier in the year, and without Lewis-Moore, life will be even harder for the Irish.

Irish coach Brian Kelly has said that “yards don’t matter” when defending the option, and he’s right. Navy will roll up a lot of yards — and is completely capable of scoring quite a few points on the ground, too.

**NAVY PASSING**

The Midshipmen rarely, if ever, throw the ball. The vast majority of their offense relies on the triple option, and the quarterbacks are far more adept at reading defensive ends on option plays than reading coverages on standard pass plays. Navy ranks 117th out of 120 teams in passing yards, earning just 109 yards through the air per game.

Senior quarterback Kriss Proctor is out with an injury this week, and sophomore Trey Miller will take his place. Miller has seen some minor game action this year, but the Midshipmen will miss their starting quarterback.

Outside of senior cornerback Robert Blanton, Notre Dame’s secondary has struggled with inconsistency throughout the season. The safeties, especially senior captain Harrison Smith, will be largely focused on stopping the run, leaving the cornerbacks alone. The only danger zone is if the defensive backs decide to play the run instead of covering the receiver they are assigned to cover. Either way, the Navy aerial attack will not be the focus of the game.
Irish face unique task against triple option

By CHRIS MASOUD
Assistant Managing Editor

High school coaches across the nation have modeled their offenses on it. Division I defenses have been blindsided by it. Yet this season, five teams have discovered how to limit it. Through thick and thin, Navy employs the option offense with the unwavering discipline the Academy embodies.

"[Navy] has seen every single thing that can possibly be done to defend the offense," Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco said. "There's only a few things that can be done — effort, fundamentally sound football, a better understanding of the plan."

Notre Dame will be handed the unenviable task of containing the Navy triple-option offense this Saturday, an assignment the Irish have failed to accomplish in two previous contests against the Midshipmen. Navy averages a whopping 325 rushing yards and 32 points per game this season.

"The biggest thing is just to be disciplined," senior outside linebacker Darius Fleming said. "You have to trust your teammates that they're going to get their job done, and that allows you to get your job done. If you're not disciplined, it doesn't matter about the speed of the game — you just won't be a good player out there."

The task of stopping the explosive Navy offense will be even harder following Kapron Lewis-Moore's season-ending knee injury sustained in the loss to the Trojans last Saturday.

"It's very hard. The young guys are playing roles they really shouldn't have to be playing right now," Diaco said. "They're really not ready to play the amount of reps they're having to play each week. The discipline and the mental focus necessary to play four quarters against a team like this and be assignment correct on every play — it becomes a challenge."

Lynch was flagged for a costly penalty against the Trojans on Saturday, a misstep that kept the Trojan drive alive and eventually led to a score. Irish defensive line coach Mike Elston said Lynch, a player that thrives on emotion, has moved past the incident.

"Aaron's got to move his life forward, and he is. He's doing a nice job of taking accountability," Elston said Tuesday. "After the game, he took accountability for his play. It was very poor. His actions were very poor that led to the personal foul, and it affected him all weekend. He came back, and he's had a great 48 hours."

Perhaps the biggest boost for the Irish will come in the form of defensive end Sean Cwynar's return to full health. The junior has been limited in practice and games due to a forearm cast, which was recently removed.

Elston said he is confident in Cwynar's ability to hit the ground running despite limited action Saturday and no defensive snaps during Notre Dame's Oct. 8 victory over Air Force, a team that also utilizes a triple option offense.

"Sean feels great with the club off," he said. "He's still a little rusty with using the hands. Sean doesn't have the size, he doesn't have the strength, he doesn't have the speed, he doesn't have the athleticism that all those other guys have. What he has is his technique and his instinctiveness and his ability to read blocks."

Diaco echoed Elston's confidence in the ability of the front line to read its keys and play disciplined football.

"They're locked in," he said. "They're preparing hard. The coaches are working on being as creative as we possibly can to maximize every permissible second of the allotted time we're with them, and they'll be ready."
Walk-on Tansey balances football with NROTC

By ERIC PRISTER
Senior Sports Writer

After time expires on Notre Dame’s annual contest against Navy, the players from both teams will join together, united, listening to their alma maters. But for one Irish player, the post-game tradition will not be the only time he stands beside his Brothers in Arms.

Junior offensive lineman Matt Tansey, as he is known on the football field, is known by another name off it — Midshipman Second-Class Tansey. Tansey is a member of Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC), which means after his football days are done, he will don another uniform — that of a Naval officer.

“I was always interested in joining the military as a kid,” Tansey said. “My grandfather was in the Navy during World War II and the Korean War. So when it came down to choosing a branch, it was the logical choice for me. It was a family thing; it was the branch that I saw the best opportunities in. I went the ROTC route because I saw an opportunity to get a scholarship to go to college and come to a place like Notre Dame.”

But when the opportunity to play football at Notre Dame arose as well, Tansey could not turn it down.

“Notre Dame football was next to the military as one of the things I wanted to do with my life if I got a chance,” he said. “And I got a chance to walk on, so I’ve been here — this is my second full season.”

But balancing football responsibilities with NROTC responsibilities is no easy task, Tansey said. NROTC allows him to work out with the football team when times conflict, but he is still expected to maintain a high endurance level, which at times goes against the type of training he does as an offensive lineman.

“It’s tough, but it just comes down to working as hard as I can,” he said. “I try as many days, as much as my workload will allow me, to try to work out after practice as well, more Navy-oriented. I try to run as much as I can outside of practice. Past that, it just comes down to trying to be as athletic as I can make my body be while still being an offensive lineman.”

Help in learning how to balance football and NROTC came from former Irish safety Tom Smith, a fellow walk-on and NROTC member.

“I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. “I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member. I’ve been lucky enough to have [Smith], who graduated last year … and was in ROTC even a season before I walked on and NROTC member.

He really helped me balance that.”

But NROTC has helped Tansey as a football player as well.

“Discipline,” Tansey said. “Hands down, discipline. Through ROTC summer programs I’ve spent time with the Marines, spent time on ships, spent time with actual Navy units. And even through the training we do here, learning how to stay in shape Navy-wise and football-wise. It’s hard to be lifting for power and running for endurance, which the Navy wants to see. He really helped me balance that.”

A day in the life of Matt Tansey

7:15 a.m. — Wake up
8:00-9:00 a.m. — Football workouts
9:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. — Science lab
12:30-1:45 p.m. — Naval science
2:00-7:00 p.m. — Football
7:00-8:00 p.m. — Extra Navy-based workout
8:00 p.m. — Homework

“Just discipline and what we have to do day-to-day and conduct our business has helped me manage that schedule and just kind of balancing everything out as best as I can.”

While Tansey said he wants to beat Navy to gain bragging rights over his future shipmates, the post-game tradition and all it represents means even more.

“Especially with Navy but with all three academies, I love the support that Notre Dame has with them,” he said. “It makes me feel that once I do get into the service, even though I won’t be an academy guy, coming from Notre Dame is almost next to that, in that we see the work that they do and try to mirror that discipline, that passion as best as we can.”

Contact Eric Prister at eprister@nd.edu

Be there when Notre Dame takes on Navy in Dublin on September 1st, 2012!

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12 Noon
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Snite Museum’s Annenberg Auditorium

Pamela Wojcik
Professor, Department of Film, Television, and Theatre

Free and open to the public.
No tickets required.

“The Apartment Plot: Fantasies of Urban Living in American Movies”

So many movies are not just set in apartments but have plots that revolve around the apartment. Think of Rear Window, Breakfast at Tiffany’s, Rosemary’s Baby, Barefoot in the Park, and more. This lecture considers the apartment plot as a key genre of mid 20th century American film and looks at the ways in which movies shape our fantasies about urban living.

Next in the series:
November 19, 2011 (vs. Boston College)
“Change: Why It Happens, Why It Accelerates and What Might Happen Next”
Felipe Fernández-Armesto, Professor
Department of History

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