Rees to the rescue
Junior backup relieves starter Golson to lead game-winning drive in 20-17 triumph

By MIKE MONACO
Sports Writer

With two minutes and 12 seconds remaining in the game, Notre Dame’s quarterback led the Irish down the field and into position for a game-winning 27-yard field goal to beat Purdue 20-17 Saturday at Notre Dame Stadium. But it was not the quarterback everyone expected — sophomore starter Everett Golson. Rather, it was junior Tommy Rees.

Rees, who was suspended for last week’s season opener against Navy, replaced Golson on the team’s final drive with the score knotted at 17. He led Notre Dame (2-0) on a 12-play, 55-yard drive that culminated with the field goal from sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza.

“The story for me as the head coach is our mantra: next man in,” Irish coach Brian Kelly said. “We had seven guys go down today. Our key players. We had two captains go down. A leader in the secondary in (graduate student) Jamoris Slaughter. Our guys just kept fighting. The next guy came in and battled. And as you know, the story finishes with Tommy Rees coming in for Golson and leading us on a two-minute drive to win the game.”

Golson led the Irish offense for much of the game, going 21-for-31 for 289 yards and one touchdown down through the air. But the sophomore fumbled inside his own 20-yard line with 3:24 left in the game and his makeup, his moxie, his skills? No. But he’s a gamer. He’ll do anything.”

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Brady said Golson was “a leader in the secondary” and his defense was stout throughout the game, even through s laughter, graduate student Evan T羡 had two captains go down today. Our key players. We were going to put the ball in (Golson’s) hand.”

Purdue coach Danny Hope responded on their first drive of the second half with a 65-yard drive, 50 of which came through the air, including a three-yard touchdown pass from Golson to junior receiver TJ Jones. Senior captain and left tackle Zach Martin said the team knew Purdue would attempt to shut down the Notre Dame rushing attack that gashed Navy for 203 yards in week one. The Irish were held to just 52 yards on 32 carries and, as a result, the passing attack needed to rise to the occasion.

“We knew they were going to load the box,” Martin said. “If they were going to do that, we were going to put the ball in (Golson’s) hand.”

Purdue coach Danny Hope echoed that sentiment.

“I thought our defensive front shut down their run game for the most part today,” Hope said. “I think out of necessity they had to throw it today.”

With the Irish repeatedly going to the air, Purdue’s defensive line went after Golson with reckless abandon, recording five sacks despite Golson’s elusiveness.

In a similar vein, the Notre Dame defense was stout throughout the game, even though Slaughter, graduate student defensive end Kaperon Lewis-Moore, freshman defensive end Sheldon Day and sophomore linebacker Ishaq Williams all left the game with injuries.

“Lost (Lewis-Moore) and Slaughter early in the game was a big loss for our team,” Irish senior captain and linebacker Manti Te’o said. “But the guys who backed them up really came in and did a great job for us and helped us come out with a victory today.”

Though Kelly said none of the injuries are expected to be long-term issues, the Irish turned to other players to step up and make plays.

Sophomore defensive end Stephen Tuitt continued his strong start to the season with two sacks, giving him four total for the year. Te’o led the Irish with 10 tackles, and junior defensive tackle Louis Nix had two vital pass deflections at the line of scrimmage.

After the Jones touchdown made it 14-7, Irish junior corner-back Bennett Jackson snatched his first career interception and set Notre Dame up at the Purdue 20-yard line.

Brindza drained a 30-yard field goal, but the Boilermakers made one of their own at the end of the first half when senior quarterback Danny Hope echoed that sentiment.

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Purdue took over at the Notre Dame 15-yard line and eventually faced fourth-and-10 from the 15. Senior quarterback Caleb TerBush stood calmly in the pocket and delivered a strike to Edward Anderson for the touchdown. The extra point tied the game at 17.

After Rees led the Irish down the field, Brindza — who was filling in for injured senior starter Nick Tausch — nailed the game-winner to put Notre Dame on top 20-17.

“48 hours ago we had an injury to Tausch,” Kelly said. “[Brindza] had to step in. That’s why I’m so proud of my guys. Next man in. Went in and got the job done.”

The Irish will look to start a season 3-0 for the first time since 2002 when they travel to East Lansing, Mich., on Saturday to face Michigan State at 8 p.m.

Contact Mike Monaco at mmonaco@nd.edu
**Report Card**

**Quarterbacks**
Everett Golson had a stellar home debut, excluding his late turnover inside his own 20-yard line. The sophomore threw for nearly 300 yards and displayed great mobility.

**Running Backs**
The Irish running backs were not called upon to do much, as Purdue stacked the box and made Golson pass. Though the numbers may not pop on a score sheet, Theo Riddick’s open-field elusiveness made him a huge asset.

**Receivers**
A group effort was needed to secure the win. DaVaris Daniels, Tyler Eifert and Troy Niklas all had long receptions downfield. The receivers are proving to be a sure-handed group and avoided any bad drops.

**Offensive Line**
The group of five that stood against Navy had a tough time containing the stout Purdue line. The right side of the line struggled, and Zack Martin — the group’s leader — recorded an uncharacteristic personal foul early.

**Defensive Line**
Even without captain and leader Kapron Lewis-Moore, the defensive line continued to be the best unit on the roster. Stephon Tuitt had two sacks and Louis Nix added one-and-a-half sacks to go with two passes batted at the line.

**Linebackers**
The unit saw a new look with Dan Fox moving outside to start and Carlo Calabrese returning to the inside off a suspension. The group stopped the Purdue rushing offense, but a double move by Edison on fourth down beat Calabrese on the late tying score.

**Defensive Backs**
Starting cornerbacks Bennett Jackson and KeiVarae Russell came under pressure after the Navy game, but each had a big game. Jackson recorded two interceptions and Russell was solid in coverage before recording a sack.

**Special Teams**
It was an up-and-down day for the special teams. Before Brindza’s winner, the unit endured a Brindza miss, a few risky decisions by punt returner Davonte’ Neal and a big return by Purdue kick returner Raheem Mosert which set up the Boilermaker score before the half.

**Coaching**
The decision to go to Rees late — while baffling to many fans — ended up producing the winning drive.

**Overall GPA: 3.0**

The wacky ending to the game can easily overshadow many of the stronger aspects of the game for Notre Dame. The defensive line continued to dominate, Golson played a solid home opener and the cornerbacks rebounded from a poor showing against Navy. The offensive line will hope to protect better against Michigan State.

**Play of the Game**
Rees to Goodman Desperation Heave Converts on Third Down

With the ball at midfield and time winding down, the Irish faced a critical third-and-six on what ended up being the game-winning drive. Rees took the snap with the play clock near zero and heaved an underthrown pass in the direction of Goodman, near the sideline. Goodman adjusted and caught the pass to keep the crucial drive going.

**Next Man in’ Philosophy**

Well, here we are.
Two continents, two countries, two trans-Atlantic flights and even two quarterbacks have been featured in between, but here we are. The Irish are 2-0, and all most will say is Notre Dame won two games it should have won, and caused too many heart attacks in between. But if you think Notre Dame, Brian Kelly and Everett Golson didn’t prove anything in yesterday’s win, you’re wrong. The last-second win may have left some students and fans walking away from the stadium with a bad taste in their mouths, but this is a different Notre Dame.

Since the Irish last took the field in a BCS game after the 2006 season, the program has struggled through five years of losses that seemed so familiar it was as if they followed a script. It goes something like this.

The Irish run out of the tunnel, followed by an opponent most consider significantly inferior. Once the game gets underway, the Irish can’t pull away on the scoreboard. They turn the ball over. They miss tackles. They lose the battle for field position. They lose the game. The role of the opponent was played by Syracuse, Connecticut, Tulsa, South Florida and thrice by Navy.

The script nearly played out again at Notre Dame Stadium against the Boilermakers on Saturday. Even though Golson played well, the Irish couldn’t pull away on the scoreboard. They let Purdue hang around, and a late turnover by Golson let Purdue tie the score. But something different happened. The Irish buckled down, converted third-downs, made a big kick and won the game. Talk about flipping the script.

Make no mistake — this is a game Notre Dame would have lost during the 2007-2011 seasons. The script felt so familiar. That was the weird taste in your mouth as you walked away from the stadium — you’ve seen that game before. Take heart in the surprise ending to the script: Notre Dame is 2-0.

The new lines in the script owe to the mantra Kelly hangs his hat on — “Next Man In.” Few in the country can line up with the talent Notre Dame has at many positions. Yet, when it needed a big sack from a defensive end, captain Kapron Lewis-Moore was on the sidelines. The next men in stepped up and sophomore and running star Stephon Tuitt added another two sacks to his rising season total. When it needed a big Reception to keep the chains moving late in the game, leading receivers Tyler Eifert and DaVaris Daniels were on the sidelines with injuries. The next men in, John Goodman, Robby Toma and Troy Niklas were the targets on the last drive. When Notre Dame needed a replacement for the most experienced member of an inexperienced secondary, Matthias Farley played exceptionally in the place of Jamoris Slaughter.

These are just a few examples, as Elijah Shumate, Tony Springmann, Sheldon Day, Kyle Brindza and Daniel Smith — all guys who won’t see their names in the starting lineup — stepped in and contributed to the win.

Let me acknowledge the obvious: Saturday’s win wasn’t pretty. It was bizarre. It was dramatic. It was at times familiar.

But Kelly’s next men stepped up and won the Irish a game they had to win.

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The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.
Rees comes off bench in win

By JOSEPH MONARDO
Sports Writer

The differences were easily noticeable: The calendar has rolled over, the torrential weather was replaced by fall sunshine, the starting quarterback had a new name and the Irish managed to turn last year’s season-opening defeat into a 20-17 victory.

But despite the change of scenery, junior quarterback Tommy Rees once again played a significant role in Notre Dame’s home opener — this year by leading the Irish on a game-winning drive in relief of sophomore quarterback Everett Golson.

Rees replaced former Irish starter Dayne Crist after halftime of last season’s 23-20 win over South Florida, and entered Saturday’s victory with 2:12 remaining. After he was greeted by a chorus of boos from the home crowd, Rees led the Irish on a 55-yard drive that culminated in sophomore Kyle Brindza’s 27-yard game-winning field goal. In his first game back after a one-game suspension stemming from a May arrest, Rees went 3-for-8 for 35 yards.

“I was a bit surprised [to hear the boos],” Irish senior linebacker Manti Te’o said. “But I think Tommy knew it didn’t really matter because he knew what was most important is that the guys out there on the field and the guys on the sideline trusted him and had confidence in his ability to make plays.”

Golson completed 21 of 31 passes in the game for 289 yards and one touchdown and added one touchdown on the ground. However, in Golson’s final drive at the helm of the Irish offense, the quarterback’s fumble allowed Purdue to gain possession at Notre Dame’s 15-yard line, setting up Purdue’s tying score.

The hand injury Golson suffered on the sack factored into the decision to change quarterbacks, Irish coach Brian Kelly said.

“(Golson) had trouble gripping the ball. I think he could have probably still have gone … We also made the decision with the flow of the game that Tommy could come in there and manage our two minute [drill] and he did a great job,” said Kelly, who told reporters Sunday he had made the decision to insert Rees before Golson’s injury. Although Golson retains the starting role — or perhaps because of it — he was not happy to watch Notre Dame’s final drive from the sideline, Kelly said.

Neither quarterback was made available to the media after the game.

“Here is what I want. I want a guy that’s upset he wasn’t in the game, and (Golson) was upset, but he is not selfish,” the third-year coach said. “He understands that we support whoever goes in the game. Just like Tommy and (sophomore quarterback Andrew) Hendrix supported Everett, it’s his turn now to support his teammates.”

Rees proved his worth in relief when he — after motioning for a timeout that Notre Dame did not have — received the snap on third and six and lofted a sideline ball to Irish senior receiver John Goodman for a 10-yard gain. On the next series, Rees completed a 21-yard pass to senior receiver Robbie Toma on third and 10.

“I’m sure they’re excited because of the injuries to be long-term problems. Nix, Tuit shine
Junior nose guard Louis Nix anchored an Irish defense that allowed only 90 yards rushing on 30 Boilermaker attempts. Nix recorded one-and-a-half sacks and batted down two pass attempts at the line of scrimmage.
Freshman defensive end Sheldon Day was forced out by dehydration while sophomore lineman Ishaq Williams suffered an injury to his elbow.

Graduate student safety Jamoris Slaughter left the game with a shoulder injury after breaking up a pass with a devastating hit in the second quarter.
Irish coach Brian Kelly said senior kicker Nick Tausch’s groin injury that forced sophomore kicker Kyle Brindza into the lineup. Brindza converted the game-winning field goal with seven seconds remaining. Kelly said he does not anticipate any of the injuries to be long-term problems.

Injuries test Irish roster depth

By JOSEPH MONARDO
Sports Writer

During Saturday’s home-opening 20-17 victory over Purdue, Notre Dame suffered injuries to seven players. On the offense, senior tight end Daniel Fountaine and captain Tyler Eifert left the game in the second half with a “mild concussion” after racking up 98 yards on four receptions.

Sophomore receiver DaVaris Daniels left the game as well with an ankle sprain after hauling in five catches for 70 yards.

The defensive line was hit especially hard, with several key players suffering injuries. Senior defensive end and captain Kapron Lewis-Moore exited the game before halftime with a calf strain. Freshman defensive end Sheldon Day was forced out by dehydration while sophomore linebacker Ishq Williams suffered an injury to his elbow.

Graduate student safety Jamoris Slaughter left the game with a shoulder injury after breaking up a pass with a devastating hit in the second quarter.
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Sophomore quarterback Everett Golson dives forward near the goal line in Notre Dame’s 20-17 win Saturday. Golson, making his home debut, passed for 289 yards and threw a touchdown to junior wide receiver T.J. Jones. Golson opened the scoring in the second quarter with a three-yard touchdown run, which was upheld after a video review.

The Irish home opener at Notre Dame Stadium brought with it an unexpected amount of late drama and an unlikely hero. Starting quarterback Everett Golson threw for 289 yards and a touchdown, but junior backup Tommy Rees returned from a suspension and came off the bench late to lead the game-winning drive in a 20-17 victory. The Irish are 2-0 for the first time since 2008.