No. 1 Sorin and No. 2 Keenan meet Sunday with the title on the line.
Top two seeds face off in battle of unbeatens

By SAMANTHA ZUHA
Sports Writer

It all comes down to Sunday. After a trying regular season for both teams, No. 1 Sorin and No. 2 Keenan will take the field in Notre Dame Stadium and square off for the championship. Keenan (5-0-1) has relied on its leadership to hold a rather young team together. The Knights struggled with injuries and absences all season but found the right pieces to pull together as a team and go undefeated. Underclassmen were forced to step up into contributing roles. Several players had to switch positions or play multiple roles. Such positional rotation could have shaken team chemistry, but senior receiver and outside linebacker Alex Green credited senior quarterback Ted Spinelli with injuries and absences all season but finding the right pieces to pull together as a team and go undefeated. Underclassmen were forced to step up into contributing roles. Several players had to switch positions or play multiple roles. Such positional rotation could have shaken team chemistry, but senior receiver and outside linebacker Alex Green credited senior quarterback Ted Spinelli with keeping the team together. “It’s important to have leadership with all those pieces moving around, and Andrew McDonough has come through,” Green said.

Green stressed Keenan’s intangibles and ability to play as a united squad and said the Knights will need these qualities in the championship. “We’ve been successful because we have team chemistry, camaraderie and leadership,” Green said. “We don’t want any regrets; we’re going to leave it all on the field. We are going to have fun but execute what we have practiced all season.”

Senior offensive lineman and defensive end Tyler Gregory said Keenan remains focused on its one season-long goal. “We wanted to win the championship,” Gregory said. “We had one goal. Now we’re one step away.”

The Knights will roll out a strong receiving corps that includes Green and fellow seniors Trevor Verrick and Nate Carr. Sorin senior running back R.J. Robinson says the Otters (6-0) will be ready with their tried-and-true strategy. “We know Keenan has a great passing attack,” Robinson said. “They have some great skill players at quarterback and receiver. We’re not going to change our defense. Our defense hasn’t given up too many touchdowns, so we’re going to take what we have done the last couple years.”

Sorin will be making its third consecutive championship game appearance. After defeating Dillon in 2010, the Otters lost to the Big Red in the finals last season, and, according to Robinson, they are glad to be back in Notre Dame Stadium. “We’re really excited,” Robinson said. “We know Keenan is a good team. This is our third year in a row making it to the championship and the seniors want to end our careers with a winning record in the stadium. I think it’s going to be a good matchup.”

Like Keenan, the Otters fought through injuries, including the devastating loss of senior captain Colin King, but Robinson lauded Sorin’s ability to bounce back. “We learned how to rally as a team,” Robinson said. “I’m happy about how our outfit has come together. We’re lucky we got a great third freshman class. They contribute a lot to our team, and our defense has been really sound. Our running backs have bad great years.”

Sorin’s featured running backs are Robinson and freshman John Pearl, but Robinson said the Otters have avoided falling into the trap of a one-dimensional offense by learning how to adapt to the absence of key players. “We have a pretty great mix between running and passing,” Robinson said. “Last week, we featured both of our running backs, and our receivers stepped up and played really well. It’s a solid mix.”

It all comes down to Sunday when Keenan and Sorin face off at 3:30 p.m. in Notre Dame Stadium.

Contact Samantha Zuba at szuba@nd.edu

Senior quarterbacks lead squads to finals

By CASEY KARNES
Sports Writer

When No. 1 Sorin and No. 2 Keenan face off Sunday there will be a buzz in the air. Few are offered the chance to run out of the tunnel at Notre Dame Stadium, and only a luckier few can claim a victory on the storied field.

Keenan senior quarterback Andrew McDonough, left, and Sorin senior quarterback Ted Spinelli will vie for the championship Sunday.

Both teams this year know they can draw strength and confidence from their senior quarterbacks. Keenan’s Andrew McDonough and Sorin’s Ted Spinelli have been key cogs in their teams’ success this year.

Experience is the key word in this matchup of two of the top quarterbacks in all of interhall football. Both are multi-year starters, but their development began at the high school level. After playing both quarterback and linebacker in high school, Spinelli saw interhall as the next step in his career. He started at quarterback right out of the gates as a freshman for the Otters, but an injury cut that season short. Spinelli returned for his sophomore year and since then has led Sorin (6-0) to the title game in all three seasons, with one victory and a chance for a second this weekend.

In the 2010 final Spinelli connected on a game-winning pass in overtime. “My fondest memory was definitely winning in the Stadium sophomore year,” Spinelli said. “The whole dorm rushed the field, and that was a really great experience.”

While last year’s team was unable to pull out the victory, Spinelli said he believes his team is up for the challenge again. “Our experience in the championship is good for us,” Spinelli said. “We won’t be intimidated. But it’s still Notre Dame Stadium, so that gives everyone a big thrill.”

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On the other side of the ball, McDonough may lack Spinelli’s experience in the championship but he took advantage of a unique opportunity last spring. “When I studied abroad, I was able to play semi-professional football for a team in Berlin, Germany,” McDonough said. “It was a great way to stay in shape, play against great competition, and continue to develop as a quarterback.”

McDonough, both with the rushing and throwing ability, has led Keenan (5-0-1) to an undefeated record in his second season as a starter. After losing in the first round of the playoffs last season, McDonough said merely making the championship isn’t enough for the Knights. “We’re really focused on taking each game one at a time, taking seven steps to the championship,” McDonough said. “Right now we’re on step seven, and we have to take the final step and win this game.”

The similarities between these two quarterbacks go beyond their performance on the field and drive to win. Both signal-callers have won the respect and admiration of their teammates. “Andrew’s work ethic is unparalleled by anybody,” Keenan senior defensive lineman Tyler Gregory said. “I can honestly say he cares about [Keenan football] more than I’ve ever seen anyone care about a sport.”

McDonough brushed off the praise, crediting his lineman and receivers for Keenan’s resurgence. “We took one man off this team, and I don’t know that we’d be here,” McDonough said. “It took a 24-man effort.”

While Spinelli similarly gave the credit for the Otters’ successful season to his teammates, they acknowledged that he was key to their success. “He’s a really good leader,” Sorin junior defensive lineman Tinner Nutter said. “He’s always there when you need him. He is great at bringing the team together, a good friend a good captain all together.”

By fighting to recover from a regular-season neck injury that sent him to the hospital, Spinelli has demonstrated his leadership and led Sorin back to the championship. Spinelli said he will be 100 percent ready for Sunday. As for McDonough, he is eagerly awaiting his final interhall game. “[My fondest memory of interhall] hasn’t happened yet, because we will be running through that tunnel on Sunday,” McDonough said.

Contact Casey Karnes at wkarnes@nd.edu

Mike Monaco
Interhall Editor

Defense wins championships, right? In the words of Lee Corso, not so fast my friend.

Though Sorin gave up just seven points in the regular season and has surrendered only another six in the post-season, this is Keenan’s game. The Knights have been clicking on all cylinders this season and have posted 63 points behind the dynamic duo of Andrew McDonough and Jeremy Riche. Expect Keenan to put up enough points against a Sorin defense that has been stout. Last year, the Otters’ bid for back-to-back titles against Dillon was crushed when the Big Red scored a late touchdown through the air.

Look for a close game Sunday, but in the end it will be the aerial attack of McDonough and Riche that wins out.

No. 2
Keenan vs. Sorin
Notre Dame Stadium
3:30 p.m.

No. 1
FINAL SCORE: Keenan 21, Sorin 14

FINAL SCORE: Keenan 14, Sorin 10

Mike Monaco
Interhall Editor

This matchup represents the classic meeting of the unstoppable object and the immovable force. Keenan has been peppering defenses with an agressive aerial attack, while Sorin has largely limited its opponents from crossing the goal line. It’s easy to say defense wins championships in this case, but what do you do when both teams have great defenses? Lost in the fold is the fact that Keenan’s defense only allowed 13 points in the regular season.

And that is what I believe makes the difference in this game. Keenan quarterback Andrew McDonough may struggle a bit, but he will find ways to score against the Otters. On the other hand, I don’t trust Sorin to do enough against the Knights’ strong front seven.
Proven Shamrocks battle upstart Wild Women

By ALEX WILCOX
Sports Writer

When No. 2 McGlinn takes the field at Notre Dame Stadium in Sunday’s interhall championship, the Shamrocks may feel a slight sense of déjà vu. On the other sideline, when No. 4 Walsh takes the field, the feeling for the Wild Women may be more along the lines of “Pinch me, I’m dreaming.”

McGlinn (7-1) and Walsh (6-2) ended last season in about as opposite a fashion as possible. Walsh won just one game and did not qualify for the playoffs, while McGlinn ran the table and took home the championship. This year, both teams boast impressive pedigrees. McGlinn’s only loss came to Pangbourn early in the regular season, and it avenged that loss in last week’s semifinals to reach the championship. Walsh, meanwhile, pulled off a stunning upset when it knocked off undefeated No. 1 Pasquerilla West. The upset win for the Wild Women is symbolic of Walsh’s emergence from the bottom of the standings to reach the championship game.

While McGlinn lost several key members from last year’s team, Shamrocks senior cornerback Aly Scala said she believes the championship run has helped this year’s team immensely.

“We know what that felt like to be in the championship game, and we know how good it felt to win and be on such a successful team,” Scala said. “Going into this season, we knew that’s what we wanted … we didn’t explicitly say it, but it was always in the back of our minds.”

Walsh, meanwhile, knows just how rare these opportunities are. The last time the Wild Women reached the playoffs was in 2009, when they were eliminated in the semifinals. After narrowly missing out on the championship game, the Shamrocks are one victory away from being one of the top teams in the nation.

Walsh senior captain and quarterback Kat Leach drops back to pass during the 2012 Women’s 7-6 victory over Badin in the championship game.

“Everyone’s beyond excited,” Leach said. “We’ll try to shut down their offense and come out with big points on our offense … it’s about finishing what we started.”

Leach said she knew the 20-0 victory over Pasquerilla West in last week’s semifinals, said she knew the 2012 Wild Women were special.

“That (win) was a confirmation that we deserved to be in the championship game and that every single member of our team plays a huge part in our success,” Leach said.

The Shamrocks and Wild Women face off in the championship game Sunday at 2 p.m. at Notre Dame Stadium.

Contact Mary Green at mgreen@nd.edu
DIFFERENT APPROACH
SAME RESULT

No. 4 Walsh looks to continue special season by toppling No. 2 McGinn.