Championship ticket tension

Inclusion of Saint Mary's students in ticket lottery divides Notre Dame opinion

By MEGHAN THOMASSEN

News Writer

To many Notre Dame students’ frustration, Saint Mary’s students will also vie for the 2,500 tickets made available for students to the BCS National Championship Bowl Game vs. Alabama to be held in Miami, Fla., on Jan. 7.

Junior Katie Fusco said she is uncomfortable with Saint Mary’s students being included in the Notre Dame student lottery, especially with an anonymous Notre Dame alumnus donating money, as she has nothing against Saint Mary’s.

“My mom thinks it’s ridiculous too,” Fusco said. “What bothers me is that we have this concerned alumnus who has donated money, and Saint Mary’s students … are going to reap the benefits of half-price tickets, especially when they don’t even go to Notre Dame.

“They don’t even contribute money back to the University. It’s our institution. I think they should have their own lottery of, say, 200 tickets or a smaller number within their own student body so it’s not a free-for-all.”

Fusco said she thinks Saint Mary’s students should have some sort of access to student tickets.

“They do support the team and they do cheer on the team at football games,” she said. “But at the end of the day, it comes down to the fact that we’re two different schools. I pay $50,000 to come here and they don’t even pay that.”

Junior Marcus Liddell said he was enthused when he discovered an anonymous alumnus donated funds to reduce the student lottery ticket price.

“I was gearing myself up to pay $350 for tickets, and then I found out they’re going to be half of that,” he said. “I think it’s a symptom of the great alumni network and the connection there is here, especially with football. And I’m glad to see the alumni still care.”

He said Saint Mary’s students should be included in the Notre Dame student ticket lottery.

“They have a right to participate fully,” Liddell said. “They’re part of the football

see TICKETS PAGE 3

Students to research abroad

By MEL FLANAGAN

News Writer

For some Notre Dame students, the holidays are a break from academics. But for others, the upcoming vacation affords a chance to expand upon their academic interests abroad.

Senior Kalyn Fetta will travel to Italy for one week over break to conduct research.

Fetta will return to Italy over Christmas break to conduct research.

see RESEARCH PAGE 4

Police combat underage drinking

By MEGAN DOYLE

Managing Editor

As tailgating officially ends with the close of the home football season, the Indiana State Excise Police will continue to target underage drinking in South Bend through the Intensified College Enforcement (ICE) program.

Excise Police added the University to the program, a product of a federal grand funding additional police presence around college campuses in Indiana, this fall. Notre Dame joined five other Indiana universities in the program, which began in the spring — Ball State University, Butler University, Indiana University, Indiana State University and Purdue University.

Excise Police officers have made a total of 138 arrests during tailgates this year, according to press releases throughout the home football season. That number does include non-students.

Cpl. Travis Thickstun, public information officer for the Excise Police, said he cannot yet measure the value of the program in South Bend.

“It will be some time yet before we can accurately gauge the program’s success, but it will not be measured by the number of tickets we issue,” Thickstun said. “Our goal is not to issue tickets or make arrests. Our goal is to reduce underage drinking.”

The most common charge among arrests was illegal consumption or possession of alcohol by a minor. According to Indiana State Excise Police press releases. Other frequent charges included possession of
QUESTION OF THE DAY:
What do you have to say to the anonymous donor?

Ronnie Peltier
Senior
Siegfried Hall
"Thank you very much."

Brenna Gautam
Sophomore
Farley Hall
“We all love you. Thank you.”

John Gibbons
Junior
Duncan Hall
"Can I give you a hug?"

Audrey McMurtie
Sophomore
Budin Hall
"I was too overwhelmed with joy to give a comment."

Janie Zhang
Freshman
Pasquerella East Hall
“I’m really thankful for such a selfless gesture.”

Andrew Ritter
Senior
Siegfried Hall
“Thanks a lot. Gotta see the Irish win!”

THE NEXT FIVE DAYS:

**Tuesday**

**“The Future of the University”**

1130 Eck Hall of Law
4:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
Philosophy, education and Catholic tradition.

Four: 7
Cavanaugh Hall
8:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m.
Catholic fellowship meeting led by students.

**Wednesday**

**Make Your Own Stressballs**

Hesburgh Library
7 p.m.–8 p.m.
Study break with snacks.

**Women’s Basketball**

Joyce Center
7 p.m.
ND vs. Baylor
Tickets $12/Adult, $5/Youth and Senior.

**Thursday**

**Last Lecture Series**

Coleman-Morse Center
7 p.m.–9 p.m.
Professors John Roos and Paul Weithman.

Iron Sharpen Iron
Coleman-Morse Center
10 p.m.–11 p.m.
Student-led praise and worship.

**Friday**

Vigil Mass
Basilica of the Sacred Heart
5:15 p.m.–6:15 p.m.
Immaculate Conception Mass.

Hockey
Compton Family Ice Arena
7:05 p.m.–9:05 p.m.
ND vs. Michigan State
Tickets $7–$25.

**Saturday**

Glee Club Christmas Concert
DeBartolo Performing Arts Center
2 p.m.–3 p.m.
$3 for students.

Men’s Basketball
Joyce Center
7 p.m.–9 p.m.
The Irish will attempt to remain undefeated at home vs. Brown.

Want your event included here?
Email obsnews.nd@gmail.com

**Dillon Hall rings in the spirit of the holiday season with the hanging of Christmas decorations on the exterior of the building Monday afternoon. The hall’s light show will captivate students in the remaining days before winter break.**

WEI LIN | The Observer
Department to offer winter sport courses

By MADDIE DALY
News Writer

Registration will soon begin for students interested in the downhill and cross-country skiing, snowboarding and curling courses offered next semester through the Physical Education Department.

The downhill skiing and snowboarding programs take place at Swiss Valley in Jones, Mich., and is offered Tuesday evenings starting Jan. 22. While the courses require an additional fee, physical education instructor Diana Scherzer said students will get a lot for their money.

“For $225, students receive four lift tickets, bus rides, rental and lessons,” Scherzer said. “Lessons are taught by certified ski and snowboard instructors from Swiss Valley. The lessons are about an hour long and then the students get to try out their newly acquired skills.”

Scherzer recommended these classes not only for fitness-related benefits but also for the opportunity to find an interest in a new sport.

“Remember, lifetime sports such as skiing, boarding, skating and curling are good for the body, heart and soul,” Scherzer said. “Learn now and it will last you a lifetime.”

Freshmen have first access to the 35 available seats in the course, but Scherzer said she expects there to be open seats for upperclassmen.

Sophomore Meaghan Hannon, an experienced snowboarder and skier, participated in the Swiss Valley program last spring and said the course was worthwhile.

“It was a great way to improve your snowboarding [and skiing] skills as well as to meet new people,” Hannon said. “Our Tuesday nights were something to look forward to, and it was a perfect homework break and stress reliever. My friends and I all had a lot of fun and would definitely consider signing up again this year.”

The class is also open to novice snowboarders or skiers. Sophomore Nikki Reyes had never seen snow in person before coming to South Bend, but was able to take part in the course last spring.

“They placed us in groups based on skills, so I was in the beginner’s group,” Reyes said. “It was tough to learn and we were sore afterwards, but I had a great time. The instructors were very helpful, and I learned a lot.”

For those interested in learning cross-country skiing, a free on-campus class will take place during Unit 4 on Mondays and Wednesdays. Scherzer will teach the class, which will run from 3 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.

“Ski equipment is provided, and there is no cost involved,” Scherzer said. “We learn the basics of cross-country skiing as well as skiing safety and dressing appropriately in the outdoors. We meet four times during the unit and ski on Burke Golf Course and around the lakes.”

Although both skiing programs were offered last year, the curling program starting in Dec. 7 when the classes will be offered for the second semester, and upperclassmen can contact the instructor to see if there is room to join.

Contact Maddie Daly at mdaly@nd.edu

Tickets

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

NEWS
NDSMCObserver.com | tuesday, december 4, 2012 | The observer
We have begun to promote these speaking engagements a few months ahead of time to give the Michiana community plenty of time to read the book. O’Brien said. “High school and college students or teachers, for instance, may have more time to read over winter break. The book could also be a good choice for area book clubs and it’s an excellent holiday gift idea.”

Rebecca Skloot, author of the New York Times bestseller will be speaking at the College on Feb. 27. “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” is a nonfiction book about an impoverished African-American tobacco farmer who had cancer cells removed from her body without her knowledge or consent in 1951. These rapidly reproducing cells became instrumental in gene mapping, the development of the polio vaccine and other modern medical breakthroughs.

The book’s title refers to Henrietta’s cells being the first “immortal” human cells — capable of indefinite growth — grown in a laboratory. Despite the massive impact of the cells in the medical field, Lacks’ name and story remain largely unknown. Decades later, her family cannot afford to pay their own health insurance, according to the release. Henrietta’s son, David Lacks, will visit campus Feb. 12 for a question-and-answer session. Neither David nor his siblings knew about their mother’s cells and their success in medicine until the 1970s, the release stated. “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” is also this year’s selection for “One Book, One Saint Mary’s,” an annual community reading project organized and hosted by the Alumnae Association. The book selection is usually a title students are reading in courses at the College. Stephanie Steward-Bridges, a member of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, said in the release, “I submitted a research proposal — a detailed list of expected costs and a recommendation from my thesis advisor — and my boss really encouraged me to pursue research in Welsh History, with a special focus on the Industrial Revolution.”

To finance her research, Brandenberger applied for funds via the Center for Undergraduate Scholarly Engagement website. She was approved and received a substantial grant from the Nanovic Institute for European Studies shortly thereafter. “I submitted a research proposal — a detailed list of expected costs and a recommendation from my thesis advisor — and my boss really encouraged me to pursue research in Welsh History, with a special focus on the Industrial Revolution.”

Brandenberger said she developed the idea for her research when she studied abroad in London last spring. “While I was there I did the parliamentary internship, and my boss really encouraged me to pursue research in Welsh History, with a special focus on the Industrial Revolution,” she said. To finance her research, Brandenberger applied for a few countries west of Fetta, senior Ellen Brandenberger will spend 10 days of break researching her senior thesis in England and Wales. “I’m conducting a thesis for my history major on understandings of cultural nationalism in Wales during the Industrial Revolution,” Brandenberger said.

Like Fetta, Brandenberger said she developed the idea for her research when she studied abroad in London last spring. “While I was there I did the parliamentary internship, and my boss really encouraged me to pursue research in Welsh History, with a special focus on the Industrial Revolution,” she said. To finance her research, Brandenberger applied for funds via the Center for Undergraduate Scholarly Engagement website. She was approved and received a substantial grant from the Nanovic Institute for European Studies shortly thereafter. “I submitted a research proposal — a detailed list of expected costs and a recommendation from my thesis advisor — and my boss really encouraged me to pursue research in Welsh History, with a special focus on the Industrial Revolution.”

Brandenberger said the majority of the funds will subsidize her visits and access to the Parliamentary Archives and archives at the National Library of Wales, where she will use primary documents to support her thesis. Fetta also received a grant from the Nanovic Institute to support her international research. She said once she started applying for approvals and grants, she found a full support network of individuals able to provide further assistance. “Anyone I contacted would have three or four more contacts for me, even just other people around campus,” she said. “They were definitely very helpful.”

Contact Mel Flanagan at mflanagan@nds.edu
false identification and public intoxication.

"This is why we wanted to have a very public campaign to let folks in these six communities and on these six college campuses know about the increased enforcement of the program results in," Thickstun said. "We don't want it to be a secret because we want to reduce the number of young people who consume alcohol under age."

Thickstun said Excise Police officers in South Bend have had "positive and cordial" interactions with students and other guests to campus while operating under the ICE program.

"Individuals have been conducting themselves in a responsible manner during their interactions with our officers," he said.

When an Excise Police officer makes an arrest during tailgating, Thickstun said that individual is taken to the stadium jail and then usually transported to the St. Joseph County Jail.

"The arrest paperwork is forwarded to the St. Joseph Prosecutor's Office for review and filing of formal charges," he said.

"If a citation is issued by an Excise officer, the report is also forwarded to the prosecutor's office for review and charges, at which time the person cited would be notified for a court appearance." Thickstun said Excise Police would continue to be present in the South Bend area despite the conclusion of the regular football season.

In an interview earlier this year, student body president Brett Rocheleau said no arrests result in the officer transporting the student to the county jail.

"While there could have been students incarcerated ... a lot of it depends on the circumstances and how the student has been interacting with police," he said.

Student government hosted a tailgate season this year, and the students were aware of the increased police presence during tailgate season and when making their decisions about drinking in general.

"I guess I would say to be smart, maybe if you are drinking and you are under age to not be carrying a beer between tailgates, not be walking with it," Thickstun said.

"I think if I was under 21, I would have been more careful." As football season ends, Excise Police will adjust their focus away from non-tailgating lots, Rocheleau said in his earlier interview.

"They are focused on liquor stores as well as bars," he said.

"They've got a lot of it going on, a lot of them, rocheleau said in his earlier interview.

"I had never seen or had any experiences with undercover cops before," she said. "That surprised me a lot actually. They identified themselves as cops before they asked for my ID."

Daul and a friend, who are both 21, were walking between tailgates and carrying beer cans when the officers approached them. The officers were polite and let the girls continue walking when they had reviewed both IDs, she said.

"I feel like there's been general talk of cops cracking down. ... I think if I was under 21, it would probably affect me more and play a bigger role in my decision making," she said.

Daul said underage students should be aware of the increased presence of these officers during tailgate season and when making their decisions about drinking in general.

"There's not going back unless they're under age," she said.

Her son and the children's father, Marquis Berry, said the family feels fortunate the situation wasn't worse and frustrated about what he called a lack of communication from the school.

"I had to find out about it on the news," Berry said.

District officials said they were notified to protect parents, but some did not have updated contact information on file.

Of the 42 children taken to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Hughes Spalding, the first four were already showing improved oxygen levels by the time they arrived, said Dr. Naghma Khan, the emergency room director.

She said those four received oxygen and were sent home with their parents since they were not demonstrating severe symptoms. The rest of the children were being released to their parents, she said. A few children were still being brought to the hospital by concerned parents, she said.

"We were really lucky that this didn't go any further than that," Khan said.

Davis, the superintendent, said the investigation continues into what caused the leak. He said authorities suspect the issue started with the boiler, which passed state inspection in 2011 and was not due for another look until 2013.

Other students were sent to a nearby middle school until their parents picked them up.

Fire officials ventilated the building and school district officials Monday night said classes would resume Tuesday at Kennedy Middle School, about four miles away. Stephen Allford, a school district spokesman, said the investigation is ongoing and the building has not yet been cleared for occupancy. Officials Monday were unsure of how long it may take for the investigation to be completed.
Champion recycling

To my sleep-deprived, “All I Want For Christmas is You”-singing, Heisman-voting, fellow students: I’m so sorry for bringing this up, but finals week is approaching. This is about the time we start to wonder what we did with our lives during the rest of the semester and reprioritize our schedules. So, obviously, our first priority remains reading articles on Notre Dame football, memorizing the lyrics to “Miami” and watching as many highlight reels as we can. After all, how often do we get to see pictures of Mark May wearing a leprechaun costume or Rick Reilly polishing helmets?

In this article though, instead of celebrating our team, I would like to celebrate all of you and your tailgating skills. More specifically, your recycling skills were pretty great.

At the BYU game, you all hit a diversion rate of more than 53 percent, and your average throughout the season was about 41 percent. While I’m extremely proud of you all, we could be doing a wee bit better. On average, we generated about 1.3 pounds of trash per person in attendance.

Before you get defensive, I realize there are some people who come to tailgate who don’t end up going to the game, and I realize that you can’t control the actions of others who may or may not be able to identify blue bags from white. Surprisingly, during the University of Michigan game, we managed to recycle the most — 25 tons.

On the other hand, we also generated the most trash — 1.8 pounds per person. While I know it’s a little late in the year to be giving out green tailgating advice, we still have Miami.

I don’t know what the tailgating scene will be looking like, but I’m asking that you try, just try, to find a blue bag or a recycling container. We have a reputation for being classy, and we can’t let South Beach get the best of us. See you all on Jan. 7.

The GreenMan

Email your predicaments to The GreenMan at askthegreenman@gmail.com and let him answer you with a sustainable twist. The GreenMan will be here every other week to provide you with insights you never knew you were missing out on until now.

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

LET'S SEE OBAMA GET OUT OF THIS ONE!

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.”

Robert Frost
American poet
**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

**Stub snub for Holy Cross**

Sunday night, I was initially ecstatic to find out that a generous alumni donated money to reduce the cost of the championship tickets.

I anxiously started reading over the rules for application and noticed that only Saint Mary’s and Notre Dame students are allowed to enter the student lottery.

As a transfer student from Holy Cross College, I find this ridiculous. Speaking from experience, Holy Cross students try their best every day to contribute to the Notre Dame community.

Even when they are relegated to the worst seats in the student section (seats for which they pay more than Notre Dame students pay for theirs), they cheer their hearts out for the Irish.

Still, there is no place for them in the lottery. Some people have told me not to get so wrapped up in this since I am on this side of the road now.

It may be true that I am in love with Notre Dame, but regardless of where I attend school now, I will always have a place in my heart for “that school across the road.”

It disappoints me that Notre Dame couldn’t find it in their hearts to include these students in this monumental occasion.

On a less serious note: When the Irish were losing by 14 points to Pittsburgh in the fourth quarter with their title hopes in the balance, what song sparked the comeback? The “Rudy” theme song. Who was cheering loudest at that moment? The Holy Cross students. Go Irish.

Paul Kearney  
sophomore  
Keough Hall  
Dec. 2

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**UWIRE**

**Death and taxes**

*Derek Olson, Minnesota Daily*

*If you’re planning on dying soon, you might want to hurry up. It’s that other certainty of life you’ll want to watch out for. The estate tax, which taxes the inheritance you pass on to your children, is about to increase dramatically.*

*Presently, there is a 35 percent rate on inheritance above $5 million. However, as a part of the fiscal cliff, the estate tax is in for an automatic increase on Jan. 1. The $5 million threshold will drop to $1 million, and the rate will jump from 35 to 55 percent.*

*If on Dec. 31 you happen to be on your deathbed with a $5 million inheritance set aside, surviving one more day will cost $2.3 million dollars in taxes.*

*That’s quite the predicament if you’re on life support.*

*The argument in favor of a higher estate tax is easy to see. Advocates argue that the moral grounds of charitable giving, of leaving behind a legacy, is an easy way to help level the playing field of equal opportunity between the rich and the poor. However, opponents argue against it on the grounds of economic efficiency and, surprise, even morality.*

*For example, consider two individuals, Bob and Joe, who each started businesses and sold them at retirement for $10 million. Bob spent his retirement gambling away his money, but Joe invested his, living modestly while his savings financed new businesses and overall economic development. Is it fair that Joe be penalized for his financial choice? Moral arguments alone make for a difficult method of justification.*

*So what of the economics of the death tax, as it is sometimes pejoratively nicknamed? Many economists, such as former University of Minnesota professor and Nobel Laureate Edward Prescott, favor a complete repeal of the estate tax. Like any good ol’ American tax, it is full of loopholes. This results in a plethora of inefficiencies and distortions in decision making. Because the estate tax raises very little revenue, about 0.2 percent of gross domestic product, some economists express doubt that the revenue exceeds the opportunity cost of all those lawyers, accountants, government administrators, IRS agents and the drag on economic growth.*

*The estate tax is another form of capital taxation, widely believed to be a harmful way to raise revenue. This brings to mind another hot topic in the public eye: capital gains, the tax on investment income.*

*For the ultra-rich who make most of their income on investments, this can make for a lower tax rate than many Americans deem fair. Currently at 15 percent, President Barack Obama favors raising capital gains to 20 percent. One caveat is in order; he will have already raised it for high earners by 3.8 percent through the Affordable Care Act.*

*In reality, the capital gains rate can be much higher than 23.8 percent, as it will become on Jan. 1. Suppose you make an investment of $1,000 and it grows by 10 percent, however, in that same time there is 10 percent inflation. Thus, the real value of your investment is unchanged. Despite having no increase in wealth, you still pay taxes on the nominal gain of $100. That’s a tax rate of infinity! Because capital gains also tax inflation, the real rate is almost never as low as it looks on paper.*

*Suppose you make your investment in the stock market. The fruits of your investment — the retained earnings of the company — are already getting taxed through corporate income taxes; your investment is taxed twice.*

*Since you have already paid taxes on the wage income that gave you money to invest, your income is subject to taxation three separate times.*

*Last week Warren Buffett wrote an op-ed in the New York Times titled “A Minumum Tax for the Wealthy” in which he scoffed at the notion that a higher capital gains rate would discourage the wealthy from pursuing investments. “In the years from 1956 to 1969… the tax rate on capital gains inched up to 27.5 percent. I was managing funds for investors then. Never did anyone mention taxes as a reason to forgo an investment opportunity that I offered.”*  

*In addition, and without any constructive solutions, he criticized tax maneuvering by the wealthy to the Cayman Islands as “sickenig.” What Mr. Buffett ignores is that a higher capital gains tax is a major contributing factor to the use of foreign tax havens and offshore accounts.*

*In fact, there is a wealth of economic literature suggesting the optimal capital gains tax rate is at or very near zero. This literature has found ample evidence that capital taxation is overly burdensome on the growth of the economy. While economic inequality is a large concern for many Americans, policies that seek to address the issue still affect everyone.*

*The more the economic pie is redistributed, the more the pie shrinks. When the economy fails to grow, those who suffer most are the poor.*

*It should be mutually agreed that economic growth is fair and beneficial to everyone. As John F. Kennedy famously quipped, “A rising tide lifts all boats.” While it is a noble position to advocate the rich paying more through estate and capital gains taxation, the drain on the growth of the economy is a cost paid by all.*

*The morals of society and what it collectively decides is fair are virtues which cannot and should not be divorced from policy making. Neither can we let objective economic arguments, which are intimately linked with fairness, be separated from the rationale behind the policies we endorse.*

*This article originally ran in the Dec. 3 edition of the Minnesota Daily, serving the University of Minnesota.*

*The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.*
Why **DIE HARD** is the greatest Christmas movie of all time

Kevin Noonan  
Scene Editor

The Christmas season inspires a lot of superlatives. It’s the most wonderful time of the year. It’s everyone’s favorite holiday. We’re going to have the hap, hap, happiest Christmas since Bing Crosby tap-danced with Danny Kaye.

I had to leave out the funniest word of that quote. But when it comes to the best superlative of them all, the greatest Christmas movie of them all, it’s not always the easiest thing in the world on which to decide. I’m not going to say that it causes a significant portion of the disputes across the country during this joyousest of holidays, but the Christmas season does see one of the highest numbers of family disputes of the year annually.

But, of course, there’s only one answer that the rightest of them all, and I’m here to deliver it and prevent all those harroom brawls and family feuds this holiday season, because I’m the nicest, smartest and handsomest. And the humblest. (I’ll cut back on the superlatives, I promise).

From the opening scene, when Officer John McClane gives his first wry smile of the film, “Die Hard” puts all other Christmas movies to shame.

The 1988 Christmas classic disguised as an action thriller follows Bruce Willis, near the end of the “No guys for real, I still have hair” stage of his career, as McClane, an NYPD officer who flies to Los Angeles to see his wife and children for Christmas, who moved to the city without him.

Right off the bat, we get the core principles of cinematic Christmas fare.

First, McClane is headed to a Christmas party on Christmas Eve, so the movie is clearly set around Christmas, an important part of the Christmas movie qualifications.

Second, it’s a film about family, as McClane is just trying to get to see his wife and kids — what more could you ask for from a Christmas film than a father trying to get to his family for Christmas? That’s straight up heartwarming.

Third, much like Santa and his reindeer must overcome unsurmountable odds all by themselves in order to deliver Christmas joy to every little boy and girl all over the world, McClane must take down an entire building full of communist-sounding terrorists all by himself and his sarcasm in order to save a group of hostages, including his wife. The movie is pretty much as Christmas as it gets.

Like any good Christmas movie, it has its share of “wink-wink” moments and nods to classic Christmas lore. A great example: When McClane paints the words “Now I have a machine gun, Ho Ho Ho” on a terrorist’s chest shortly after besting him in a good old fashioned battle of wits (and machine guns).

The scene is clearly a reference to Jolly Old Saint Nick’s well-known go-to phrase when little kiddos hop onto his lap in shopping malls all over the world, and it’s a classic Christmas moment that melts the iciest of hearts.

No holiday film would be complete without an antagonist audiences root against, but nobody can really hate during Christmas, so the bad guy must be somebody you sort of love and respect too.

Well, friends, look no further than Hans Gruber, played by the incomparably stellar Alan Rickman before he watered down his brand by turning out to be a good guy as Snape at the end the Harry Potter movies.

Gruber tells the police he’s a politically motivated terrorist, but really he’s just confused. Does he have a political agenda? Or does he actually want to rob an unholy amount of money from Nakatomi? Deep down, he’s really just a lost little international thief, looking for some direction and his detonators.

And of course, what Christmas story would be complete without a feel-good redemption storyline? “Die Hard” delivers again, in the form of Carl Winslow from “Family Matters” (Reginald VelJohnson). VelJohnson plays LAPD Sgt. Al Powell, who suffers from self-doubt and is afraid to use his pistol after an accidental shooting earlier in his career. Powell is McClane’s only friend throughout the film, but it’s clear that he needs to redeem himself and get back to form in order to be fulfilled as a person.

He gets his chance at the end of the film, and when Powell unloads his revolver into the Karl, that slippery little un-killable rascal of a terrorist, eyes tear up with the knowing how much it means to the sergeant.

And of course, the happy ending, Christmas movies have a happy ending, that goes without saying — who wants a downer on Christmas?

After saving all the hostages and dropping Gruber off the side of the building like it wasn’t even a big thing or whatever, McClane finally gets to be with his family. So grab the eggnog and raise a toast the greatest, most spectacularest Christmas movie ever made.

Contact Kevin Noonan at knoonan2@nd.edu  
The views in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.
By MARIA FERNANDEZ  Scene Writer

Boy bands are back and have millions of girls singing their popular songs and following their every step via social media outlets. One Direction, The Wanted and Emblems — for all of you X-Factor fans — are all part of this new boy band wave and their current success indicates they are here to stay, for now.

I am personally a fan of boy bands. On my way to school, I used to blast 'n Sync and Backstreet Boys tunes and drive my mom crazy. I knew them all by heart and went to every single concert they performed near my town.

So, where are some of these former boy band stars now?

Nick Carter

Carter was my favorite Backstreet Boy and, after the group first separated, I kept buying and listening to all of his solo albums, such as “Now or Never” and “I’m That Off.”

Carter has also had several TV appearances after leaving the band. In 2006, he and his siblings starred in their own E! reality show called “House of Carters.” He has also made guest appearances in “8 Simple Rules,” “American Dreams” and most recently the CW’s “90210.”

Howie Day

Throughout the band’s ups and downs, breakups and reunions, Day has ventured in different projects that have also kept him in the music, television and entrepreneurial world.

He has guest-starred in “Roswell” episodes, as well as in “Sabrina, The Teenage Witch.” He also released his solo album “Back to Me” in 2011 and toured with Britney Spears that same year to South America.

Currently, Howie manages Canadian band Neverest and works at his own real-estate development company, which he founded with his older brother John in 2010.

Joey Fatone

Funny-man Joey Fatone was one of my favorite ‘n Sync members. After the band disintegrated in 2002, he continued to have a strong presence in the television world.

In 2007, he came in second place in ABC’s “Dancing with the Stars,” and was also the host of the American and Australian versions of “The Singing Bee.”

Currently, Joey is the announcer of “Family Feud” and is also a guest host for “The Price is Right Live!” in Las Vegas.

Justin Timberlake

Last but not least, former boy band’s most popular member, Justin Timberlake, has had great success post-‘N Sync.

After he left the band, Timberlake released two solo albums that sold millions of copies worldwide. He won six Grammy Awards and four Emmy Awards for these two albums.

In addition, Timberlake has starred in successful films, such as Oscar-winner “The Social Network,” “Bad Teacher” and “Friends With Benefits” alongside actress Mila Kunis.

Timberlake is also a triumphant entrepreneur. He has his own record label, Tennman Records, his own fashion label, William Rast, and two restaurants, Destino and Southern Hospitality both in New York City.

In October of this year, Timberlake married long-time girlfriend and Hollywood actress Jessica Biel. They had

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Laura Laws | The Observer

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An NFL Christmas list

The 32 NFL teams also have some things they wish they could have this season. So without further ado, here is the NFL team wish list for 2012.

The Saints desperately want the return of big toys. They just wish they weren’t sitting at 5-7 and almost out of the playoff picture this year.

And speaking of coaches, the Eagles and the Chargers could fast-forward three years with all the young talent on their roster. Both with records of 11-1, the Eagles and the Chargers just want respect. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Bills and the Raiders just wish a little luck would fall their way.

The most appalling wish comes from the Seahawks, who want the replacements referees to return.

Not surprisingly, quarter-backs are the most popular requests this Christmas.

The Jaguars want a real quarterback and the Jets wish they could call Vinny Testaverde out of retirement again.

The Dolphins, Colts and Redskinks hope their signal callers keep forgetting that they’re rookies, while the Rams wish they didn’t pass on taking rookie phenomenon Robert Griffin III in the 2012 draft. All the Steelers want for Christmas is the return of Big Ben, even if it’s in one of those horrific uniforms. And the 49ers are wishing they didn’t bring this quarterback controversy upon themselves.

Maybe best of all, the Chiefs want Brady Quinn to be their franchise quarterback (Okay, maybe that’s what I want). Last but not least, the Titans and Cardinals want to rewind the clock to March for another shot at signing Peyton Manning.

The Broncos, meanwhile, want Mr. Manning to keep calling those audibles — papa bear, but, but.

In the end, no matter what these teams wished for, Santa Claus — who may currently be disguised as Dallas defensive coordinator Rob Ryan — will be coming to town Dec. 25. By then all the teams better have their act together, especially with the playoffs just around the corner.

Contact Peter Steiner at psteiner@nd.edu

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

NFL

Raiders’ Allen leaves team to join ailing father

Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Being mired in a five-game losing streak with a short week to get ready for Peyton Manning and the first-place Denver Broncos is tough enough.

The Oakland Raiders have to do it without their head coach. Dennis Allen left the team after Sunday’s 20-17 loss to Cleveland to be with his father, who has a serious medical issue. Allen is expected to rejoin the team on Wednesday night and be on the field Thursday when the Raiders (3-9) host the Broncos (9-3).

But until then, offensive coordinator Greg Knapp will oversee the team and defensive coordinator Jason Tarver will map out the defense.

“This is a pretty unique season, both on and off the field, I’ll say that,” Tarver said Monday. “There’s a bunch of adversity and the true character of a man and a coach and whoever is to, no matter what the circum-stances, be a pro and handle your business. But I’ve been a part of a lot of different situations, both in this league and in coaching, but there’s some unique things that have happened this year.”

Allen is with his family in the Dallas area helping to care for his 66-year-old father, Grady, a former NFL linebacker with the Atlanta Falcons. Knapp said he texted Allen on Monday morning to send good wishes and planned to talk to the head coach as the team prepared for the Broncos.

Oakland did not practice Monday and will have two brief practices before the game Thursday. With the short week, the position coaches had begun some of the scouting of the Broncos last week to allow the coordinators to put together the game plan on Sunday night and Monday.

Allen, a former defensive coordinator in Denver, is typically heavily involved in the defensive game plan, while giving more general tips about philosophy for Knapp to use on offense.

“Today we went right into a normal Tuesday routine for coaches,” Knapp said. “We started game planning this morning for Denver, and then our practice schedule for the next two days will obviously be a little bit shorter because our guys need to still recover from this game and get ready for the next game. From a game-plan standpoint, you condense may-be three days of practice into two. From a coaching standpoint, you’ve done a lot of work ahead of time, so you can make it happen a little bit sooner during the week.”

While Knapp is officially in charge of the team while Allen is away, he said the only real add-itional responsibility he will have is to decide when to blow the horn to move to the next practice period.

Some of the players just learned of Allen’s absence on Monday and wanted to pass their best wishes on to their coach and his family. They said it will be hard to concentrate entirely on the Broncos knowing what Allen is going through.

“I think it will because ob-viously we’ll be caring about his situation, just wondering what’s going on,” cornerback Michael Huff said. “But we know we have a game to get ready for. It will because we’ll be worried about him, but I think we’ll still walk on the field and focus.”

The Raiders will need to be at their best to have a chance against the Broncos. Oakland has lost five straight games and was carved up by rookie Brandon Weeden on Sunday in the loss to the Browns.

Now the defense must deal with Manning, who was 30 for 38 for 338 yards and three touchdowns in Denver’s 37-6 home win over Oakland in Week 4.

The Raiders are also dealing with a number of injuries in the secondary, with starting free safety Matt Giordano, backup safety Mike Mitchell and back-up cornerback Phillip Adams all leaving Sunday’s game with concussions.

Oakland coach Dennis Allen yells during the fourth quarter of the Raiders 20-17 home loss to the Cleveland Browns on Dec. 2.
Injury-plagued Terps fall to UConn

HARTFORD, Conn. — Maryland coach Brenda Frese was thrilled with her team’s effort despite a 15-point loss to No. 2 Connecticut.

“I’m proud of how we battled,” she said after the ninth-ranked Terrapins lost 63-48 Monday night. “I love the fact there’s no quit in this team. We worked defensively, scratched, clawed, did everything we can. Forced UConn into some difficult plays.”

Frese’s team has been hit hard by injuries so far this season. The Terrapins have already lost starting guards Grene Moseley and Laurin Mincy to ACL tears. Starting guards Brene Moseley and Tianna Hawkins are battling cancer. And, obviously, for me personally with my son, Tyler, going through leukemia and with his diagnosis and his treatment I think it just helps us to be able to with a national audience and on TV to bring even more awareness to all the people out there that are battling cancer. And, obviously, our family is one that’s directly impacted, but the fact that we can play a game and bring exposure is really important and we’re just really fortunate to be a part of it.”

The teams will play again in the Jimmy V Classic next season at Maryland. This was the first meeting between the programs. UConn continued its domination of ACC opponents, winning its 20th straight over ACC teams, winning by an average of 28.0 points.

Associated Press

The Future of the University: Philosophy, Education, and the Catholic Tradition

A lecture by John Haldane

Introduction by Rev. John J. Jenkins, C.S.C.

4:30 p.m., Tuesday, December 4, 2012
Room 1130 of the Eck Hall of Law

The lecture is free and open to the public. Reception to follow.

John Haldane is professor of philosophy and director of the Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He is chairman of the Royal Institute for Philosophy in London, and consultant to the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Culture in Rome. Prof. Haldane has authored or edited more than 20 books, published nearly 200 scholarly articles, and contributes regularly to numerous newspapers, magazines, and television and radio programs.
Irish ready for the great indoors

By AARON SANT-MILLER
Sports Writer

Every December, Notre Dame student transition between sea-sons and semesters. But one group of Notre Dame student athletes experience a unique transition—from outdoor com-petition on the cross-country course to indoor competition in the Loftus Sports Center.

“It’s really a quick turn-around,” junior Martin Grady said. “Pretty much we had a one down week to go home for Thanksgiving break, but then we got right back to school and had to get right back to work.”

It’s very short. For anybody competing through nationals, it’s a very short turnaround, senior Rebecca Tracy said. “Most people can get up to a month off, but it’s a very short turnaround with regards to training.”

This short turnaround can present numerous challenges for the runners, both Tracy and Grady said. The cross country season is a grueling few months.

“For some people, the cross country season really beats them up. You start training for cross country as early as July and you put in high mileage all the way through November,” Tracy said. “There is not a lot of time to rest your body or take care of any nagging injuries.”

Pure rest isn’t the solution ei-ther, Grady said. Runners need to find a happy medium be-tween rest and conditioning.

“It’s hard because a lot of kids start to get injured when they stop running and then start up again,” Grady said. “The chal-lenge is staying in good shape, while allowing yourself to get the much needed rest.”

Fortunately for many of the cross country runners transition-ing to indoor track, the first few meets are less demanding and less important, which allow for some of the runners to take them a bit easier, Grady said.

“As it works out, the early meets aren’t too serious,” Grady said. “The meets definitely build as the season goes on, but, at first, the meets aren’t too tough. They are almost more inter-squad stuff than anything else. But they get harder as we go.”

Yet, the track season is innate-ly different, making for a tough transition, Tracy said. Still, these changes can come with some exciting elements.

“For me, when you start run-ning shorter distances, you feel like you want to go fast, which is very different,” Tracy said. “Also, track is exciting in its own right because you get to watch so many people compete in what they are specialized most in, in-cluding the sprinters and field athletes.”

Some of the differences are not absolutely positive, Tracy said, as some aspects of cross country are especially strong.

“Cross country has a great team atmosphere,” Tracy said. “Everything you do is for the other people out on the course with you. During track, that at-mosphere kind of goes away a bit.”

Grady said some prefer the greater division of the track team.

Yet, there are positives to the greater segmentation of the track team Grady said.

“It’s kind of cool that the dis-tance guys, then, only run with a group of eight guys. We do a lot together that helps us get a lot closer,” Grady said. “On the whole, cross country is a team sport so you feel close then, but the smaller groups help build on those relationships.”

The Irish runners will make their big move indoors Friday, when they host the Blue & Gold Invitational at the Loftus Sports Center. The competition kicks off at 5 p.m.

Contact Aaron Sant-Miller at asantmil@nd.edu

MLB

Napoli signs with Red Sox

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Adding offense following a disappoint-ing season, the Boston Red Sox have agreed to a $39 million, three-year contract with catcher Mike Napoli, a person familiar with the deal said.

The agreement is subject to Napoli passing a physical, which will take place later this week, the person said Monday. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal was not yet final.

“Awesome addition to our team!” Red Sox pitcher Jon Lester tweeted.

A 31-year-old who also plays first base, Napoli hit .320 with 30 homers and 75 RBIs as the Texas Rangers won their second straight AL pennant in 2011, then slumped to a .227 average with 24 homers and 56 RBIs this year as he became a first-time All-Star. His on-base percentage dropped from .406 to .343.

Napoli is a .306 career hitter at Fenway Park (19 for 62) with seven homers and 17 RBIs. He is the third free agent this offsea-son to join the Red Sox following outfielder Jonny Gomes, who got a $10 million, two-year contract, and catcher David Ross, who re-ceived a $6.2 million, two-year deal.

“He’s a guy who is getting on base, has power, would be a good fit for our ballpark,” Red Sox general manager Ben Cherington said, without con-firming the agreement. “We like his offense at Fenway. We like the versatility.”

The right-handed-hitting Napoli could see most of his playing time at first base because Adrian Gonzalez was traded to the Los Angeles Dodgers in August along with pitcher Josh Beckett and outfielder Carl Crawford.

“We knew when we made the Dodge trade and we moved Gonzalez that we were going to have to try to find a way to re-place that offense,” Cherington said.

Texas was unwilling to guar-antee three seasons for Napoli, who hit .350 with two homers and 10 RBIs in the 2011 World Series against St. Louis.

“They were very upfront with us throughout the process. So not a surprise,” Rangers general manager Jon Daniels said. “I’m hesitant to use the word disappointment because ultimately we had a decision to make.”

Boston now has four catch-ers, with Napoli joining Jarrod Saltalamacchia, Ryan Lavarnway and Ross. Saltalamacchia started 95 games behind the plate last season, with Kelly Shoppach get-ting 42 starts and Lavarnway 25.

The Red Sox could trade one of their catchers, but that might wait until spring training.

“We’re pretty comfortable where we are,” Cherington said. Boston still is looking for a left-handed bat and starting pitching.

The Mets are discussing whether to trade NL Cy Young Award win-ner R.A. Dickey, but the price in prospects would be high.

“It’s always steep for the better guys, a valuable commodity, so if a team is going to move someone, especially if there’s any length of control, they’re asking for a lot,” Cherington said, “as we would.”

Boston is coming off its first last-place finish in two de-cades, a year when the Red Sox went 69-93 and lost 26 of their last 33 games. Manager Bobby Valentine was fired and replaced by John Farrell.

“You’ve got to add a lot of wins (from) where we finished to com-pete in this division,” Cherington said. “I think players and agents understood that despite what happened this year, Boston is We’re committed to hav-ing a winning team. We have a history of a winning team. We’re going to commit resources to the team.”

At last year’s session in Dallas, Cherington called the winter meetings a “cesspool of informa-tion flow and dialogue.”

“You go through the cycle once and you’re a little bit more com-fortable with everything you have to do,” he said, “and maybe more aware of the potential pot holes and able to navigate those hopefully.”

Congratulations to the Fighting Irish! The #1 team in the nation! Now meet our winning team!
By ISAAC LORTON
Sports Writer

On Saturday night as the No. 6 Irish took on Lake Superior State, a little girl held up a sign that read “T.J. Tynan is a red-haired ninja.”

The description seemed fitting, as Irish coach Jeff Jackson said the junior center has been quietly and subtly contributing to the team’s offense this season without scoring, and then Tynan exploded this weekend for one goal and three assists. In the 10th minute of the first period, Saturday, junior defenseman Shayne Taker passed the puck to center ice off the boards. Two Laker players went after junior left-winger Jeff Costello, and an unimpeded Tynan took the puck across the blue line, creating a two-on-two break. Sophomore right-winger Peter Schneider skated across from Tynan, while both Laker defensemen looked to play the pass. Tynan took advantage of the opportunity and fired a wrist shot near post, beating Laker junior goaltender Kevin Kapalka to the left post, for his third goal of the season. Jackson said he was happy Tynan was able to get a goal.

“He’s a heck of an offensive player,” Jackson said. “I figured he would come out of it at some point.”

Tynan had not scored a goal since the 4-1 win over Minnesota-Duluth in Notre Dame’s home opening series Oct. 19. Tynan had two assists in Friday’s 3-2 win and one goal and one assist in Saturday’s 6-1 rout of the Lakers (7-9-0, 4-6-0-0). Tynan said it was good to finally get the goal, but he was happier about the team win.

“Yes, it’s nice to get on the score sheet,” Tynan said. “We had a really good start [Saturday], I thought, and anytime you win 6-1, you’re going to feel good about it. It was a real positive for us tonight.”

Jackson said Tynan has continued to play at a high level, despite not scoring.

“ar hasn’t taken short cuts,” Jackson said. “That is pretty impressive, actually, for a good offensive player.”

Tynan said the scoring dry spell did not worry him, as the Irish (11-4-0, 7-1-0-0) have been winning nonetheless.

“I don’t think I was fighting it,” Tynan said. “I just knew that eventually I would get out of the slump. When you work hard and just keep doing the things that you are right to do — just do the little things right — especially when you’re team is winning, you really can’t be complaining about it. So it was a good weekend for us and it was definitely nice to get that monkey off my back.”

Tynan said the 6-1 offensive win was nice for the team, but the main focus was not who scored, but who was winning.

“I don’t think we have been winning (an offensive explosion),” Tynan said. “We have won games where we haven’t scored a lot, so I think we are just worried about winning and worried about doing the little things right. We are worried about coming to practice each day and working on our scoring skills, knowing we are able to put up numbers like we did [Saturday].”

With Tynan, the “red-haired ninja,” setting an example by doing all of the little things right, the Irish look to close out 2012 with wins over Michigan State on Friday and Saturday night at Compton Family Ice Arena.

Contact Isaac Lorton at ilorton@nd.edu

Irish junior center T.J. Tynan fights for the puck during Notre Dame’s 6-1 victory over Lake Superior State on Dec. 1.
**Offense**

*Continued from page 16*

the defense] every day," Goodbread said. "Every prac-
tice, he’s there in the individ-
ual drills especially. He works
exclusively with the second-
ary, you know he’s a former
defensive back himself when
he was a player and he spends
a lot of time with the cor-
ners and safeties. He’s prob-
ably had more of an impact
on [Milliner] and all the cor-
ners than just about anywhere
else."

Milliner, who played much
of 2011 as a corner in nick-
el and dime packages, has
emerged as a star on a defense
that lost many stars coming
cr. mosley just got
called "23 hot" and
Goodbread said. "[Junior line-
backer] C.J. Mosley just got
voted the MVP of the team
game for sure. He’s the best
backer..."

"We have to] not turn the
ball over," he said. "With that
great of team or any team ac-
knowledges how good we are.
"with Notre Dame’s slow-it-
down-and-grind-it-out offen-
sive philosophy, can cause problems
for opposing teams, Brey said.

When we’re playing zone and
playing patient against our
defense, the Irish have been
good at dictating the tempo,
our 23 hot are our staples
and we need to be able to rotate
through them.

"You never know going into a
game what you’re going to be in
more. You may think ‘Probably
not a night we’re going to play
zone’ and then you play zone
for 30 minutes. You just never
know.

The zone defense, when mixed
with Notre Dame’s slow-it-
down and grinds-it-out offensive
philosophy, can cause problems
for opposing teams, Brey said.

When we’re playing zone and
being patient on offense, so you
have to guard us for a long pos-
tion and then you have to come
and be patient against our
zone, I think that takes its toll
on you psychologically," he said.

"Your never can really do any-
thing fast." 

"Stanford was really good. Pitt was really good. USC was
really good. There were a lot
good defenses this year.

Riddick said the key to
putting points on the board
against the stellar Tide defense
is protecting the football.

"I think we played a lot of
good defenses. A lot of teams
do a lot of different things so
it’s kind of hard to pinpoint
which defense is better than
others," Riddick said. "It all
depends on the matchup.

There’s too many teams.

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Happy Birthday:

Choose wisely when you help others. Making suggestions rather than taking over will ensure you don't end up with both responsibilities that still hinder reaching your goals. A partnership will enable you to do that will position you for future opportunities. Love will take a serious turn. Acceptance is key to making the most of the changes heading your way. Your numbers are 6, 14, 21, 24, 30, 39, 44.

ARIES (March 21-April 19):

Reassess your physical and financial situation and make positive adjustments to counter any problems that might arise. Keep your emotions in check and listen carefully to what's being said. Information will be the key to your success.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20):

Check out the possibilities and the contributions you can make. Positive changes will increase your earning potential and help make your personal life less stressful. Use your intelligence to get what you want.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20):

A great idea can lead to professional mishap. A change in the way you earn money may be stressful at first, but once you take charge of your life and your future prospects, you will find peace of mind. Trust in your ideas.

CANCER (June 21-July 22):

Your charm and expertise will help you gain support. Networking will ensure greater opportunity to form a partnership that can alter your life. Business and personal relationships must be nurtured.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):

What you say will influence the outcome. Consider the additional responsibilities you will incur if you make an error now.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):

Listen as well as engage in talks and you will make a difference to your community, a friendship or your direction. Take action when you feel someone is stepping on your toes or making a move that can influence your financial position.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):

Use your imagination to avoid a professional mishap. A change in the way you earn money may be stressful at first, but once you take charge of your life and your future prospects, you will find peace of mind. Trust in your ideas.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):

You may feel uncertain or confused regarding your future, but if you rely on your imagination, ingenuity and unique style, you will discover a path that leads to greater comfort and joy. Open up about your desires and help will be offered.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):

Make domestic and personal alterations that will allow you to cut corners that have been causing you grief and holding you back. You are best to resurrect old means and methods and allow for more for less. Dig to get the facts.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):

You must set your mind at the door when dealing business. You can gain ground if you are efficient, a little ruthless and stingy. Common sense coupled with an interesting way to get more for less will make you look like a genius.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):

It's time to make major changes. A partnership will allow you to cut corners that have been causing you grief and holding you back. You are best to resurrect old means and methods and allow for more for less. Dig to get the facts.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):

All eyes will be on you, and controversy can be expected. Ensure that you have well-laid out plans and you will be difficult to defeat. Money will come to you from an unusual source, enabling a wish to come true.

Birthday Baby:

You are unique, dedicated and just. You are insightful and precise.
All season long, No. 1 Notre Dame's offense has gone up against the top-ranked scoring defense in the country, its own, in practice. On the precipice of a national title, the offensive unit will need to overcome the second-ranked scoring defense of No. 2 Alabama in the BCS National Championship Game.

Despite only allowing 10.7 points per game this season, the Tide defense is widely regarded to have dropped off from the play of its unit in 2011. Alabama shut out LSU 21-0 in the 2012 BCS National Championship Game, but lost highly-touted safety Mark Barron, cornerback Dre Kirkpatrick and linebackers Donita Hightower and Courtney Upshaw to the NFL.

Alabama beat writer Chase Goodbread said the 2012 defense has not been quite as dominant as its predecessor. "I don't think they're as good as a defense as they were a year ago. They're not as good as last year," said Goodbread, who covers the Tide for the Tuscaloosa News. "I think the strength is stopping the run, they were No. 1 in the country at stopping the run, but the passing defense isn't what it was a year ago."

Just as Notre Dame's unit features a top-notch defensive coordinator in Bob Diaco, the Tide march to the beat of defensive coordinator Kirby Smart. Smart, who took home the 2009 Broyles Award as the nation's top assistant coach, is considered a leading candidate for many head coaching vacancies. This season Smart filled holes left by the departure of more than half of his 2011 starters and preserved the Tide's defensive identity. "Kirby Smart does a great job. I don't think there's any doubt about it he's going to be a head coach pretty soon," Goodbread said. "It might be this winter depending on what kind of offers he gets. He's done a good job year-to-year pretty much, no matter what he's had to work with."

The defensive unit also works under the tutelage of Alabama coach Nick Saban, who comes from a defensive background. Saban played defensive back for Kent State in the early 1970s and served as Bill Belichick's defensive coordinator with the NFL's Cleveland Browns from 1991 to 1994. Goodbread said Saban's focus on the defensive backfield has helped first-team All-SEC junior cornerback Dee Milliner. "(Saban) works with the offense too."

Irish senior running back Theo Riddick takes advantage of a defensive hole during Notre Dame's 22-13 victory over USC on Nov. 24. The Notre Dame offense is preparing to take on Alabama on Jan. 7.