

## **SPLINTERS FROM THE PRESSBOX - Paul Fullmer '55**

### **Complete Irish Team Pummels Purdue 38 – 10; Show They're Ready To Roll After Three Straight Wins**

Irish Nation loved it, a 38 – 10 stomping of traditional rival Purdue (2-2). For the first time this year, both the ND offense and defense played up to their potential in suffocating their hosts, who were never in the game and scored their 10 meaningless points against ND reserves. Fans are hopeful after the team's third straight win that the Irish will put together a long mid-season winning streak to earn a BCS Bowl bid .

Notre Dame's offensive stars – Tommy Rees, Michael Floyd and Cierre Wood had a field day.

Quarterback Rees said, "Having the offensive line do a great job and both of the backs running hard and receivers making blocks downfield – is awesome to have big chunks from your running game."

Even Coach Brian Kelly was a little giddy after the game in the raucous locker room. "I love the way we matched their intensity in the fifth week of the season. You can see they're pretty happy about the way they played."

### **Rees And Floyd Have Banner Day**

For the first time this year, Notre Dame (3 -2) displayed a balanced offensive plan that had the over-matched Boilermakers back on their heels for 60 minutes. Sophomore quarterback Rees had Purdue defenders guessing all night as his confidence built with every completion. Rees hit on 21 of 34 for 238 yards and three touchdowns. More importantly, no interceptions or turnovers.

Floyd, who disappeared in the second half against Pittsburgh, was determined to get back into the flow and Kelly tilted the play-calling in his direction. Floyd responded with his 16<sup>th</sup> 100-yard game, breaking Golden Tate's career record. After only four receptions last week, Floyd made it look easy when hauling in 12 balls at Purdue for 137 yards, including a 35-yard TD bomb on the second offensive play that took all the steam out of the Boilermakers.

Kelly explained, "More of a concentrated effort to make sure he got his touches making it a part of our game plan. He has to touch the ball."

Meanwhile, Wood and Jonas Gray were running wild, showing both speed and muscle. Wood picked up a career-high 191 yards on 20 carries (9.5 per rush) and Gray, who has really rebounded after his disastrous goal line fumble at Michigan added 94 more on just 15 carries. Both scored touchdowns.

“Our running game set up everything we did tonight,” Kelly said. “I thought physically our backs really exerted their will on Purdue.”

ND racked up 551 yards on offense during Saturday’s romp, just one yard shy of doubling Purdue’s output.

“Limiting turnovers, playing fundamentally well on both sides of the ball – I’d say it’s probably the most complete game we’ve played. But it’s not where we want to be,” Rees added.

But Kelly saw too many warts. “We haven’t arrived yet.” he said.

### **Two Knockdown Punches In First Minute**

The Irish delivered two telling punches right off the bat Saturday. Purdue tried to pick on often-challenged Gary Gray, but the fleet cornerback picked off the pass and set up Rees’ 35-yard scoring strike to Floyd that quickly put ND up 7 – 0.

Unlike other weeks in which the Irish let teams get back into the game, this time Kelly and Rees went for the jugular. After botching a field goal, the defense forced a 3 and out. Rees and the Irish, aided by several of Purdue’s 13 penalties, moved down before Gray drove over from two yards out for a 14 – 0 lead. After kicker David Ruffer missed a 49-yarder, ND went up 21 – 0 when Wood burst through and raced 55 yards to pay dirt. Although Purdue posted a field goal to make it 21 – 3 at half time, the game really was over. ND was on a roll to its third straight win.

### **ND Answers Second Half Questions**

Instead of going into the deep freeze in the second half, Kelly had the Irish on fire to open the third quarter. Rees marched his teammates 70 yards with the kickoff and the baby-faced QB hit tight end Tyler Eifert for the touchdown that made it 28 – 3.

Rees came back with another efficient scoring drive, this time connecting with TJ Jones for the TD that turned the scoreboard to 35 – 3. The Boilermakers did manage to score a touchdown

against the reserves to make it 35 – 10, but there were few Purdue fans left in the stands to cheer. They knew Kelly’s Irish had trampled their team.

### **Defense Again Excelled At Purdue**

Manti Te’o and his cohorts on defense stuffed Purdue’s running game and stifled their passing at every turn. However, Kelly wasn’t happy that Purdue scored that late TD against the subs.

“I told our defense, it’s not kiddie time when you go in there. It’s not acceptable to go in there and not play good defense. That’s one area where, when those young guys get in there, they have to play to a level all of our defensive players have to play to.”

### **Air Force Presents Stern Test**

Flying high after a wild 35 – 34 overtime win over the arch-rival Navy, Air Force (3-1) will be looking for another big win on national TV Saturday in South Bend. Even though the Irish are much bigger than the Falcons, Air Force uses multiple offensive sets that have always confused the Irish. Quarterback Tim Jefferson is a magician with the ball and can hit a timely pass. Backed by a loud home crowd, Rees should have his way with the smaller Falcons’ secondary. Even if Air Force gets ahead early, ND fans should remember the Falcons blew an 18 point fourth quarter lead last Saturday.

Go Irish! Four Straight!

Paul ‘Splinters’ Fullmer

[PSFUL@aol.com](mailto:PSFUL@aol.com)