

Take That

DuBose, McDonald and company took it upon themselves to shut out the upstart crew from Purdue

by Nik Mathews

It had been a long day for the Boilermaker offense.

Purdue had managed to gain only 226 total yards on the Notre Dame defense. Moreover, both of its quarterbacks, Eric Hunter and Matt Pike, had been limited to a combined 124 yards through the air. The Boilermaker rushing attack, led by the heralded Jeff Hill, who gained only 19 yards on 13 carries, had been completely squashed.

The scoreboard, which read 42-0, indicated exactly how dismal and unproductive the Boilermakers' nationally televised afternoon in college football's mecca had been. As they marched down the field with under six minutes remaining, Purdue was well aware that the game was out of reach. What they were struggling for then, however, was a little respect. But the Notre Dame defense was on its own mission for respect.

Ranked 96th nationally out of 107 Division I-A teams in total defense as a result of surrendering 423 yards per game, the motivated defensive unit had manhandled Purdue's offense all afternoon. Ten astounding third down stops in 13 tries were particularly impressive and encouraging.

The Boilers, who now threatened from the Notre Dame 1-yard line, stood between a good day and an exceptional day for the Irish defense. In the words of defensive end Devon McDonald, "We worked

so hard, getting the shutout was principal."

When Purdue quarterback Matt Pike mishandled the second down snap, he conceded the victory in the battle for respect to the Irish. Although the fumble recovery by Brian Hamilton that preserved the shutout meant nothing for the outcome of the game,

"This game will go a long way in helping our defense believe in itself."

While the Irish defense stopped the Boilermaker offensive attack, the Purdue defense was unable to stop Notre Dame. Neither team was able to sustain a successful passing game. With torrential downpours,

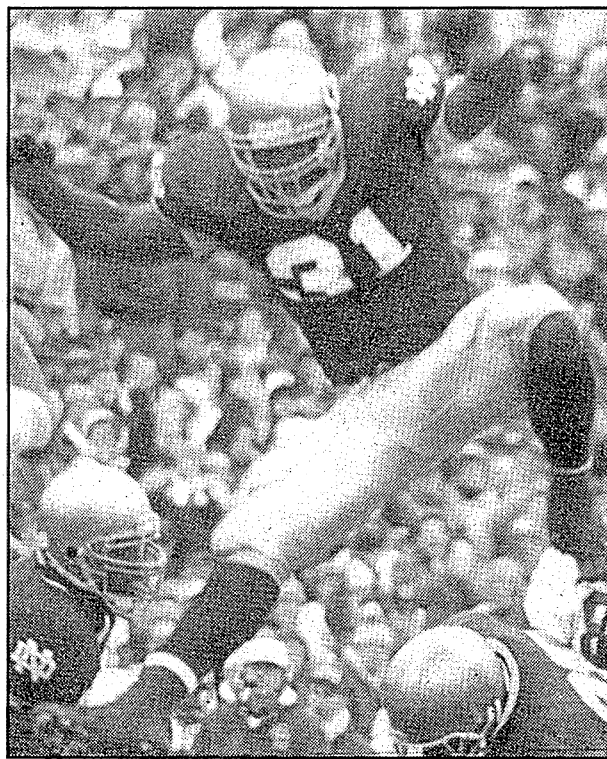
the quarterbacks had a difficult time holding onto the ball. But the rain did not stifle the Notre Dame ground attack. When senior quarterback Rick Mirer could not hold onto the ball, he only completed 6 passes out of 16 attempts, the Irish changed their strategy to a running game. Boilermaker quarterbacks Matt Pike and Eric Hunter only completed 8 passes out of 26 attempts, but neither could get the running game moving.

"It was difficult to throw the ball. I talked to Rick Mirer and he agreed. We just couldn't get a grip on it," remarked Pike.

At first Notre Dame had a difficult time adjusting to the rain factor. The Irish only led by a score of 13-0 at halftime, due to a series of incomplete passes. But the third quarter marked a change of pace when the Irish came tearing out of the locker room to score three touchdowns in just eight minutes. Tailback Reggie Brooks scored two touchdowns, while fullback Jerome Bettis was credited with one

touchdown.

Bettis summed up the day by saying, "Today I was the 'other' back. I learned some tips from Reggie."



Ken Osgood

Spearheaded by senior linebacker Demetrius DuBose, Notre Dame's defense swamped Purdue's offense on a rain-sodden field.

it was imperative for the confidence of the once much maligned Irish defensive unit.

Defensive lineman Bryant Young commented on the inspired play of the defense,

Bettis, who himself had an excellent day with 93 yards rushing, was referring to the exceptional play of Brooks, who rushed for 205 yards on just 15 carries with touchdown runs of 63, 20 and 80 yards.

Brooks' phenomenal outing made him the first Notre Dame back in the Holtz era, and the sixth ever, to run for over 200 yards in a game. In fact, it was the first time since Allan Pinkett rushed for 217 yards in a 1983 loss to Penn State that a Notre Dame player had rushed for over 200 yards.

The combination of Bettis and Brooks was responsible for almost 300 of the 458 yards on the ground, the most by a Lou Holtz team in his seven years as head coach at Notre Dame. All told, the offense compiled a whopping 580 yards on the day for the 3-0-1 Irish.

Purdue head coach Jim Colletto commented, "Their backs are very good. We played hard up until 13-0, but Bettis and Brooks are so good that they took over."

Bettis and Brooks, however, were not the only reasons for the offensive onslaught.

Another contributing factor in the Irish success was the dominating effect that field position proved to have on Purdue all afternoon. The Boilers spent most of the day pinned deep in their own territory. Of their 14 series, 11 began inside their own 29-yard line, including possessions on the 1, 4, 8, 9, 13 (twice) and 15-yard lines.

While the offense proved that it was among the nation's best, the defense showed, with an inspired performance, that it should be taken more seriously.

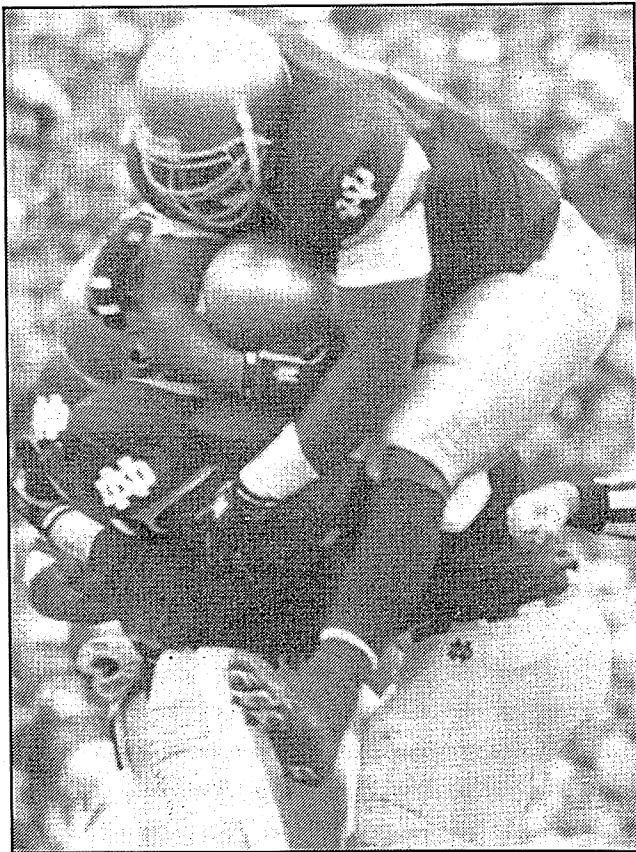
"Coach Holtz took us aside and said, 'Hey, this is the situation.' He told us we're the number 96 defense in the country, and that's not the way it is around here," explained linebacker Demetrius DuBose. "That appealed to our pride. We knew we were going to win the game, but we knew our defense had to play well."

By holding Purdue to nine yards in total offense in the first quarter, not allowing a first down until 18 minutes into the game and allowing only 64 by halftime, the Notre Dame de-

fense showed that it deserves a higher ranking than 96th out of 107 teams.

**"I thought we played excellent defense. ... It wasn't the way we played but the intensity with which we played, the physicalness with which we played."
— Coach Lou Holtz**

"If we played like we did, it takes a lot of pressure off the offense," explained DuBose. "They don't have to worry about



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The Irish defense created much cause for celebration after recording a 54-0 shut out over the Boilermakers.

scoring too many points. That's how we want to play. We don't want to put our offense in a bad situation. It was nice to help them for a change."

The Boilers were only able to cross midfield four times. One of those drives ended in a punt, another was fumbled on the Irish 1-yard line and two were misfired passes that ended in interceptions.

The Notre Dame defense was in the process of reorganizing after adjusting to three different defensive coordinators in the past year. Gary Darnell is now at Texas, Holtz took over for the remainder of last season and, finally, Rick Minter has settled in at the position. But now things are beginning to change. The Irish have begun to take a more simplified approach to the defensive strategy.

"We kept it simple. We played good, aggressive, hard-hitting football. It was great," remarked McDonald.

Added defensive lineman Bryant Young, "I thought we played outstanding. This is definitely what we needed to establish ourselves for the rest of the season."

Praised Notre Dame head coach Lou Holtz, "I thought we played excellent defense. Let's give credit to our defensive coaches and to our defensive football team. They have taken a lot of heat, and I thought it was an outstanding performance. It wasn't the way we played, but the intensity with which we played, the physicalness with which we played. I thought it was an outstanding performance."

The only memorable Irish mistake was the end of Craig Hentrich's amazing string of 130 consecutive PAT kicks. Notre Dame's remarkably consistent kicker missed a point after attempt when the snap by Lance Johnson bounced on the ground before reaching the hands of holder Matt Johnson. Hentrich's kick went wide right. Early in the second quarter, Hentrich also missed a 31-yard field goal attempt. Another attempted extra point was blocked by backup kicker Kevin Pendergast. On the whole, it was not a great day for the kicking game, primarily because the

slippery field conditions made setting the ball difficult.

The Purdue game was by Holtz' account the most complete game the Irish had played up until that point. It proved to be one of the most complete and dominant games of the entire season. In addition to being Brooks' step into stardom, it will be remembered as a turning point for the Notre Dame defense, which amassed a significant amount of confidence and began a trend of drastic improvement that would take root against Brigham Young three weeks later. The Irish defense was also rewarded a respectable 32nd overall defensive ranking



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Reggie Brooks rumbled over Purdue, netting 205 yards on 15 carries and three touchdowns. Brooks' outing made him the first Notre Dame back in the Holtz era, and only the sixth in the history of Irish football, to run for over 200 yards in a game.

the following week.

This 48-0 battering that Purdue endured was the harshest defeat the Boilermakers

We had some spurts, but they were the dominant team today. They can go a long way." □

have ever had to suffer in the 64 game series with Notre Dame. The Irish had not trounced a team so significantly since a 48-0 victory over Army in 1974. This was Notre Dame's first shutout since a 1991 win of 38-0 over Navy.

Commented Purdue head coach Jim Colletto, "It was just a matter of them being much more physical up front than we were. They tried many different sets and fronts on us that we were just unable to control. We prepared hard for this game, but they were too tough.

GAME SUMMARY

Scoring Summary

	1	2	3	4	Final
Notre Dame	7	6	22	13	48
Purdue	0	0	0	0	0

1st Quarter	ND: Bettis 5 run (PAT) at 11:15
2nd Quarter	ND: Mirer 6 run (PAT failed) at :15
3rd Quarter	ND: Brooks 63 run (Becton run) at 10:23
	ND: Bettis 24 run (PAT) at 7:50
	ND: Bettis 20 run (PAT) at 2:50
4th Quarter	ND: Brooks 80 run (PAT) at 14:37
	ND: McDougal 15 run (kick failed)

Team Statistics

	ND	PU
First Downs	26	13
Rushing	22	4
Passing	4	6
Penalty	0	3
Rushing	458	102
Passing	122	124
Total Net Yards	580	280
Average Gain Per Play	7.6	3.8
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	3-1
Penalties-Yards	9-75	1-5
Punts-Averages	6-34.8	10-33.1
Kickoff Returns	1-6	5-76
3rd Down Conversions	6-14	3-13

Individual Statistics

Rushing: ND - Brooks 15-205-3, Bettis 18-93-2, Becton 7-53, Mirer 5-26-1, Stafford 4-16, Zellars 3-13, McDougal 2-35-1, Lytle 2-11, Johnson 2-2, Klusas 1-3, Lozano 1-1 PU - Coleman 3-48, Connors 6-34, Hill 13-13, Hunter 4-7, Alstott 1-5, Smyikle 1-2, Pike 6-(-7)
Passing: ND - Mirer 16-6-122-0-0 PU - Pike 19-5-88-0-1, Hunter 7-3-31
Receiving: ND - Dawson 2-57, Bettis 2-38, Griggs 1-16, Miller 1-11 PU - Hill 2-34, Ross 2-30, Smikle 1-22, Dennis 1-20, Simmons 1-10, Coleman 1-8