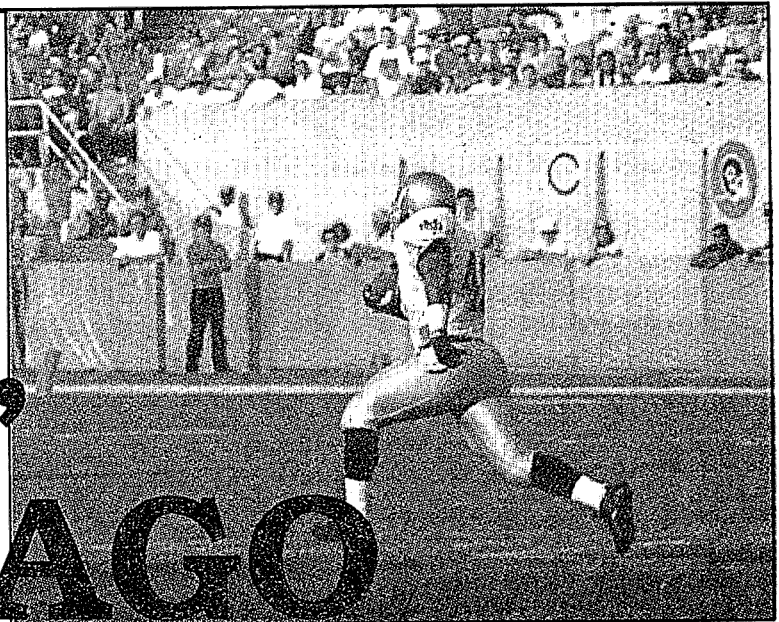


SWEET HOME, CHICAGO



Nick Spangler

It's off to the races for Reggie Brooks on this 72-yard touchdown run. The senior tailback tallied 157 of Notre Dame's 391 rushing yards against Northwestern.

Notre Dame blew into the Windy City and blew out Northwestern

by Amanda Clinton

Irish fans were expecting to blow out the Northwestern Wildcats. But the first half of this game was far from easy for Notre Dame.

The Irish had a difficult time dealing with the wild play-calling of the Wildcats, but once Northwestern had exhausted every fake punt, reverse and flea-flicker in its playbook, Notre Dame had no trouble disposing of the pesky Wildcats.

The scoring began with junior tight end Oscar McBride catching a 5-yard touchdown pass. McBride, playing the game with his jaw wired shut from an injury acquired nine days earlier, scored his second touchdown of the game on a similar play in the second half.

The Wildcats tied up the game with 47 seconds left in the first quarter on a 14-yard run by wide receiver Lee Gissendaner. This was Northwestern's only touchdown of the day.

In the second quarter, sophomore tailback Lee Becton gave the lead back to the Irish with a 3-yard touchdown jaunt to cap off an 86-yard drive.

As the Notre Dame football team jogged off of Soldier Field at halftime, it was hard to believe the score. The Irish were only

leading the Wildcats, a team which consistently finishes the season in the basement of the Big Ten, by a score of 14-7. Northwestern limited Notre Dame to only three offensive possessions in the first half.

"At the half it was important for us to remember we were ahead. Sometimes a team can come in and get down after playing like that. We had to remember we were leading," stated Holtz.

Said senior tailback Reggie Brooks, "It was frustrating for us in the first half. That's where Rick helped. He kept calming us down, telling us not to be too over-anxious."

Mirer can be credited with holding the team together, as well as completing 8 of 17 passes for a total of 165 yards and two touchdown passes.

Despite the slow start in the first half, the momentum changed after halftime with the help of senior defensive end Devon McDonald. McDonald became an inspirational leader in the absence of senior linebacker Demitrius Dubose. Dubose suffered a two-game suspension for NCAA violations. In addition to being an emotional leader for the Notre Dame defense, McDonald also tallied seven tackles and three sacks by the end of the day.

Stated McDonald, "Those sacks were a team effort. We needed something badly at

the time. Something had to happen."

While McDonald took over Dubose's leadership role, junior linebacker Peter Bercich inherited his position at linebacker. Bercich finished second on the team in tackles with eight.

"I was disappointed with the way I played," said Bercich. "It's a new spot. Certain situations caught me off guard."

At halftime Devon McDonald encouraged his defensive teammates to pick up the intensity.

"We came into the locker room, after the coaches got through I asked, 'What's going on?' It was time for someone to stand up. I'm a senior. It's up to me to make sure we get it going," explained McDonald.

Senior tailback Reggie Brooks also made something happen in the second half. Despite a thigh bruise, he tallied 157 yards on nine carries, one of which was a 72-yard touchdown. Brooks also carried on a 45-yard run but was taken down by the Wildcats before he could reach the endzone.

Brooks answered the questions about whether he would measure up to the high standards his brother Tony, now a Philadelphia Eagle, set while playing for Notre Dame.

Explained coach Lou Holtz, "I always thought Reggie could be better than Tony."

Countered Brooks, "Tony always said that too. That's just like him, though."

Holtz not only answered questions about the ability of Reggie Brooks, but he also discovered who would be his starting tailback.

"I made a comment earlier that we don't have anybody proven at tailback, but I felt we'd be good at tailback. I felt Reggie, Willie, Lee Becton and Jerome Bettis performed well," explained Holtz.

Brooks, Becton and Clark accumulated a total of 224 yards while junior fullback Jerome Bettis amassed a total of 134 yards on 19 carries.

A Rick Mirer/Mike Miller connection changed the pace of the game in the second half and proved to be a turning point for the Irish. Mirer launched a 70-yard pass to Miller who ran it into the endzone for a touchdown. This momentum change occurred with 5:47 left to play in the third quarter, when Northwestern was only trailing by seven points.

"I had good protection. Northwestern was in man coverage," explained Mirer. "I just threw it out there and let him chase it down."

Stated Holtz, "A post pattern by Miller with the other receiver running an under-route. It was a perfect pass. Mike Miller made some good things happen out there today."

Mirer also tried his foot at punting. In the role of a "pooch punter," Mirer successfully kicked the ball 37 yards where the Wildcats were trampled on their own 3-yard line.

In addition to this new kicking game, senior place-kicker and punter Craig Heinrich returned to his position after being injured during the 1991 Tennessee game.

While the Irish offense answered questions, the defense left many wondering. How could Notre Dame allow Northwestern

to accumulate 408 yards? Many wondered whether this was a preview of the defense for the season to come or a strategy to let Michigan enter the game the following week with an overconfident attitude.

Stated McDonald, "We've got a week to prepare. We have to batten it down. We're

next.

Said Holtz, "We never made them work for a lot of passes. That's what's disappointing. But let's give them credit."

"Defensively it was a 'bend don't break.' We can't play that way. We did not respond on defense the way we had hoped. We never disrupted their rhythm the entire game. We just can't play that type of football. We're kidding ourselves. We have to be more aggressive," remarked Holtz.

Said Northwestern head coach Gary Barnett, "The slogan we established this year was 'expect victory.' We didn't do that today and anything less than that and we're not satisfied."

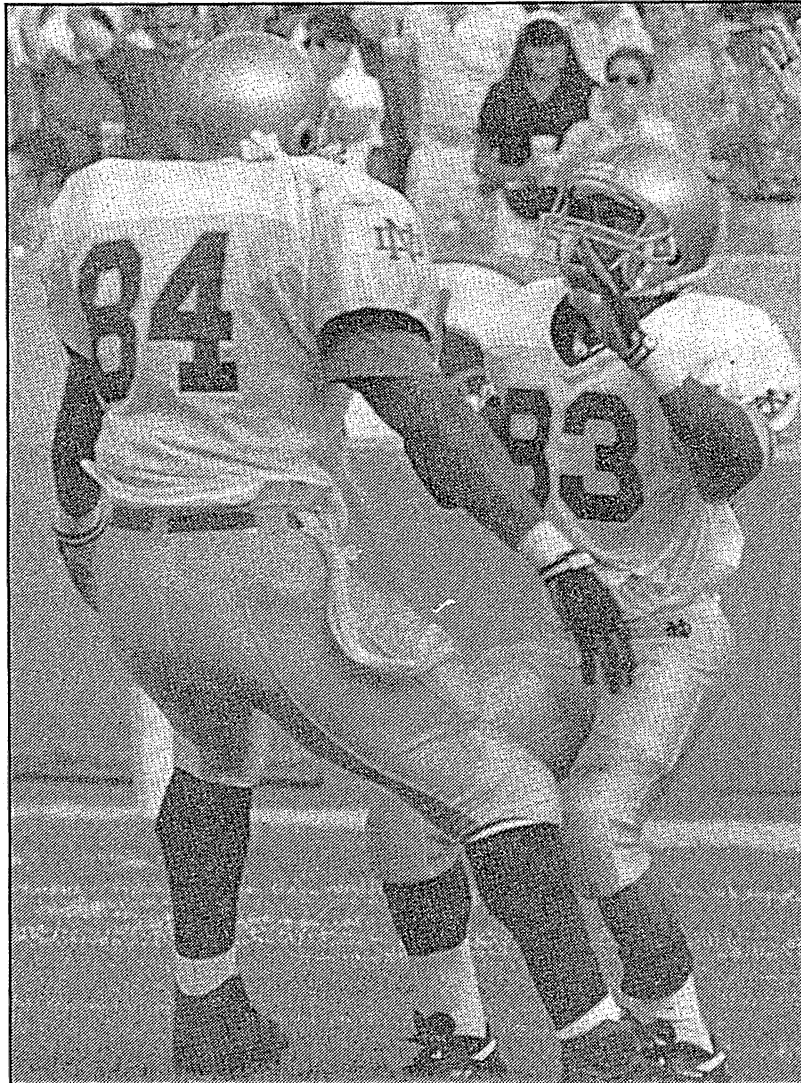
But Barnett should be pleased with the Wildcats' ability to contain the Irish for as long as they did. Barnett attempted to stifle the Irish attack by running a fake punt which, although successful, was not enough to counter a powerful Notre Dame offense. Wildcat quarterback Len Williams, who is the short man in the punt formation, received the snap and tossed the ball to his teammate Greg Gill for a 17-yard gain and a first down.

Despite a change of pace in the second half, where the Irish tallied 28 more points and did not allow the Wildcats to score again, Notre Dame did not feel that it had beaten North-

western the way the third best team in the nation should have. Notre Dame dominated the running game, amassing 391 yards to Northwestern's 81 yards, and the Wildcats dominated the air, passing for 327 yards and holding the Irish to 170 yards.

Explained Mirer, "It doesn't feel like we beat them 42-7. They played us really tough."

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, it was not tough enough. □



Nick Spangler

"Big" Irv Smith (6 feet 4 inches tall and 246 pounds) is eager to embrace "Little" Mike Miller (5 feet 7 inches tall and 155 pounds) after Miller's 70-yard touchdown reception.

not playing Northwestern next week. Michigan is bigger and stronger, like a pro team."

Many also wondered why the Irish allowed Wildcat quarterback Len Williams to throw for a total of 281 yards when his average last season was only 148 yards. Notre Dame also allowed Northwestern to dominate the beginning of the game by letting the Wildcats plow down the field 70 yards on the first drive and 80 yards on the