

NOTRE DAME

2004 OUTLOOK

Junior wide receiver Rhema McKnight returns to lead an experienced Irish receivers corps. McKnight led the Irish with 47 receptions for 600 yards in 2003.

2004 Notre Dame Football Outlook

Cementing the Foundation For the Future Irish return 14 starters and 47 letterwinners

The last three even-numbered Notre Dame football seasons have produced nine or more wins and three postseason bowl appearances (one Fiesta Bowl, two Gator Bowls).

The last three odd-numbered seasons, on the other hand, have produced a combined 15-20 record.

Third-year Irish coach Tyrone Willingham won't be disappointed if that form holds in 2004 – though he's far more convinced that an injection of renewed confidence, 14 returning starters (eight on offense, six on defense) and 47 returning letterwinners will dictate what happens to Notre Dame as it attempts a rebound from a 5-7 mark in 2003.

After a 10-win campaign in Willingham's inaugural season in South Bend in 2002, the Irish in 2003 battled gamely against a schedule rated the third most difficult in the country by the NCAA. Three of Notre Dame's losses last fall (Michigan, USC and Florida State) came against teams that played in Bowl Championship Series games to end the year.

"The first thing we've got to do as a football team is get our confidence back," says Willingham. "We did not play with a great deal of confidence during the 2003 season, and we've got to have the confidence, the toughness and mental discipline that it takes to be a good football team."

"Beyond that, we'll break down the individual areas that were weak for us last year – the red zone, turnovers, first down success, third down efficiency. From a technical standpoint those are areas where we need work."

This time around, Notre Dame's challenging slate features eight opponents that won eight or more games and played in bowl games following the 2003 season, including Rose Bowl participants USC and Michigan (the others are Michigan State, Purdue, Navy, Boston College, Tennessee and Pittsburgh). The 2004 opponents combined for a .626 winning percentage (87-52 in 2003) – compared to a .645 mark for last season's foes.

The Irish will build their offense around a solid corps of eight returning regulars, a returning starter at quarterback in sophomore Brady Quinn, a 1,000-yard rusher from 2002 in senior running back Ryan Grant (he added another 510 yards in 2003), five of the top six pass receivers from 2003 (led by junior Rhema McKnight with 47 grabs for 600 yards) and four returning regulars on the offensive line.

Notre Dame played in 2003 with a completely new offensive front – especially after the injury loss of projected regulars Sean Milligan at guard and Gary Godsey at tight end – and transitioned to a rookie sig-

nalcaller early in the year. The Irish now are banking on maturation of the troops on that side of the ball – plus a greater understanding of the system – in year number three under Willingham.

The most noteworthy losses offensively include running back Julius Jones (he proved to be the most dangerous Irish performer in 2003 with his 1,268 rushing yards and 10 touchdowns), top-rated offensive tackle Jim Molinaro and second-leading receiver Omar Jenkins.

"Offensively, this is an exciting time," Willingham says. "We have a quarterback returning in Brady Quinn who has shown some skill, yet he's still a young quarterback and he needs to further develop those skills."

"We have a 1,000-yard rusher returning in Ryan Grant. We have an offensive line that returns more people than we lost, and there could be some movement with our personnel there to give us a better chance to be successful. There's some youth in that line, and there's some game experience, too. In terms of receivers, we will miss a major guy in Omar Jenkins, but we've got some guys returning that have shown on occasion that they can be football players.

"Now what we have to do is be consistent and make sure that all that we do from an offensive stand-



Senior defensive end Justin Tuck is within reach of the Notre Dame career quarterback sacks record. He has been mentioned as one of college football's premier all-around defensive players by several preseason magazines. Photo by Joe Raymond.

Quarterbacks

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*Quinn, Brady	6-4	220	So.	250:53
Dillingham, Pat	6-2	210	Sr.	2:04

Fullbacks

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
** Powers-Neal, R.	6-2	237	Sr.	74:55
Schmidt, Josh	6-1	226	Sr.	72:58
Schiccatano, Nate	6-2	236	Jr.	5:11
McConnell, Ashley	5-11	238	So.	---

Running Backs

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*** Grant, Ryan	6-1	211	Sr.	146:01
** Wilson, Marcus	5-11	201	Sr.	16:49
Jenkins, Jeff	6-0	215	Jr.	---
Thomas, Travis	6-0	208	So.	---

point caters to the young men we have on the field – and that they are playing the tough, hard-nosed style of Notre Dame football that we like.”

On defense, Notre Dame will miss a half-dozen graduated veterans in two-time leading tackler and inside linebacker Courtney Watson (he led the Irish in 2003 with 117 tackles and was a 2002 Butkus Award finalist), down linemen Darrell Campbell (three-year starter at tackle) and Cedric Hilliard (71 tackles in 2003 at nose guard), plus secondary veterans Vontez Duff (33 tackles and two interceptions in 2003; third-team All-American in 2002), Glenn Earl (169 career tackles) and Garron Bible (started eight times at strong safety in 2003).

On the plus side, the Irish return four of their top five tacklers from the 2003 season. Blue chip returnees defensively include senior inside linebackers Brandon Hoyte (he ranks as Notre Dame's leading returning tackler with 74 in 2003) and Mike Goolsby (he ranked third in tackles in 2002 with 75 and paced the squad that year in tackles for loss, then missed all of 2003 due to injury), defensive ends Justin Tuck (set Notre Dame single-season sack record in 2003 with 13.5), Kyle Budinscak (started first eight games in 2003) and Victor Abiamiri (started five times as rookie in 2003) – along with returning secondary regulars Dwight Ellick (starter in six of last eight 2003 contests) at cornerback and Quentin Burrell (led Irish in interceptions in 2003 with four and added 58 tackles) at free safety.

“Defensively, we're losing some very good football players – names like Darrell Campbell, Cedric Hilliard, Courtney Watson, Glenn Earl, Vontez Duff,” Willingham says. “We have some men returning that are young and eager, and if they can gain that confidence and have that mental toughness, then we've got a chance to play some fine defense.”

Notre Dame's kicking game will miss graduated Nicholas Setta (46 career field goals in 66 attempts; 40.9 punting average in 2003) in a couple of areas. Back in both the punting and placekicking departments is D.J. Fitzpatrick, who filled in at both slots (hit 12 of 17 field goals; 44 punts for 36.8 average) when Setta missed the final seven games of 2003 due

to injury. A key goal will be to identify some new names in the kick return category – after Duff and Jones collaborated to handle 53 of the 77 combined punt and kickoff returns in 2003.

Willingham's roster of assistants loses secondary coach Trent Walters (after two years with the Irish he joined the NFL Philadelphia Eagles in the same role) and adds Steven Wilks (he coached defensive backs at Bowling Green in 2003) in that same assignment.

Here's a position-by-position breakdown of the Irish for 2004:

QUARTERBACK: Sophomore Brady Quinn (157 of 332 for 1,831 yards, 9 TDs, 15 interceptions) took over the starting quarterback job four games into his rookie campaign and displayed the potential that gives him a chance to make a major name for himself in seasons to come. This spring, Quinn showed improvement in understanding his role in the offense and continued to emerge as one of the team's leaders.

His 59 attempts in his first start at Purdue marked the second-highest single-game total in Irish history – and he later completed 23 throws against Boston College for a career-best 350 yards and two TDs. Despite playing only a reserve role in the first three games, he still set a Notre Dame single-season record for pass attempts – and only Jarious Jackson in 1999 (184) and Ron Powlus in 1997 (182) completed more throws in a season than he did in 2003.

Senior Pat Dillingham (played in one game in 2003), a one-time walk-on who was awarded a scholarship prior to the 2002 season, is the top returning backup to Quinn – with Carlyle Holiday switching to wide receiver on a full-time basis. Dillingham made one start, played in seven games overall and threw for 434 yards in support of Holiday in 2002.

But Dillingham will have to earn his backup spot this fall when a pair of freshmen arrive: Darrin Bragg and David Wolke.

RUNNING BACK: The Irish must replace their most productive offensive threat from a year ago in Julius Jones (229 attempts for 1,268 yards, 10 TDs), but they'll do it with a 1,000-yard rusher from the previous season in senior Ryan Grant (143 for 510, three TDs in 2003; 261 for 1,085, nine TDs in 2002).

Grant became Notre Dame's ninth 1,000-yard rusher in 2002 thanks to four 100-yard games – and still started the first five games in 2003 at the running back slot. He's a tough, slashing style of runner who should be the anchor of the Irish running corps. A proven veteran, Grant appears ready to resume the role of featured back in the Irish attack.

Additional experience comes from senior Marcus Wilson (14 for 29) who made 62 special teams appearances last fall while playing in 11 games – along with junior Jeff Jenkins (he played in three games in 2003, making 12 special teams appearances), who has yet to carry the ball from scrimmage.

Another potential contributor who will have his chance to inject himself into the mix is highly regarded sophomore Travis Thomas (DNP in 2003). Thomas was limited by an injury during spring drills but has impressive ability. Two heralded freshmen will join the Irish in August and could contribute at tailback: Justin Hoskins and Darius Walker will have the chance to work into the playing rotation, or create an even more important role.

FULLBACK: The two players who shared the

Wide Receivers

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*McKnight, Rhema	6-1	208	Jr.	205:05
** Stovall, Maurice	6-5	224	Jr.	190:48
*Samardzija, Jeff	6-5	208	So.	35:32
** Shelton, Matt	5-11	177	Sr.	21:15
*** Holiday, Carlyle	6-3	221	Sr.	13:00+
Anastasio, Chase	6-1	202	So.	---

+ - approximate playing time at WR

Tight Ends

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*Palmer, Billy	6-3	257	Sr.	173:14
*Pasano, Anthony	6-4	249	Jr.	102:07
** Clark, Jared	6-4	244	Sr.	95:54
*Freeman, Marcus	6-2	245	Jr.	5:45
** Collins, Jerome	6-4	255	Sr.	33:26+
Carlson, John	6-5	240	So.	---

+ - playing time at OLB

workload at fullback in 2003 – seniors Rashon Powers-Neal (four rushes for 15 yards; 7 catches for 50) and walk-on Josh Schmidt (13 catches for 125) – both return to the Irish roster, but both players will be looking to improve their blocking ability and expand their role in the offense.

Powers-Neal gives the Irish a mixture of skills and versatility at this slot, as he switched to fullback a year ago after ranking second in rushing as a tailback in 2002. He has impressive running ability, and could also serve as a backup tailback. Schmidt emerged in 2003 as a solid receiver and blocker in complementing Jones and Grant. He could challenge for the starting job this fall.

A couple of other fullback options figure to be junior letterwinner Nate Schiccatano (1 for 2) who made 46 late-season special teams appearances a year ago – along with sophomore Ashley McConnell (DNP in 2003).

WIDE RECEIVER: Notre Dame boasts a couple of star quality wideouts in juniors Rhema McKnight (47 for 600, 3 TDs) and Maurice Stovall (22 for 421, 3 TDs) on a unit that could be bolstered significantly if



Sophomore quarterback Brady Quinn settles in for his second season as the starter. Photo by Lighthouse Imaging.

Centers

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*Morton, Bob	6-4	298	Jr.	265:54
*Giles, Zachary	6-3	285	Sr.	60:55
Sullivan, John	6-3	288	So.	---

Offensive Guards

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*LeVoi, Mark	6-7	317	Sr.	311:40
** Stevenson, Dan	6-5	293	Sr.	207:13
*Ryan, Jamie	6-5	307	Jr.	121:40
*Mitchell, Darin	6-3	287	Sr.	45:23
Thompson, Jeff	6-4	294	Sr.	5:51
Bonelli, James	6-4	272	Jr.	2:26
Santucci, Dan	6-4	289	Jr.	1:13+
*Morton, Bob	6-4	298	Jr.	265:54#

+ - playing time at DT

- playing time at C

former quarterback Carlyle Holiday can be as successful in a full-time switch to wide receiver as Arnaz Battle was in making the same position change a few years back.

McKnight, the top Irish receiver a year ago, boasts the elusiveness and game-breaking ability to continue his development into a top-drawer threat. The team's most complete receiver, McKnight has become a leader for the receivers corps through his experience and performance. Stovall, at 6-5, has all the physical tools to do the same thing if he can become more consistent in his route running and catching. An exceptional athlete (he ran a 4.48 40-yard dash last spring), Stovall is young for a junior (just 19 years old), but continues to make strides toward becoming a complete receiver.

Holiday is a fifth-year player who caught only two passes in limited work as a receiver in 2003 while still serving as the top backup at quarterback. A gifted all-around athlete, Holiday should benefit from devoting all his time to the receiver position, in hopes of mirroring the sort of contributions one-time signalcaller Battle made in catching 58 throws for 786 yards in his full-time go-around as a wideout in 2002.

There's depth at the receiver slots as well in speedy, two-time senior letterwinner Matt Shelton (3 for 80, 1 TD) and lanky, 6-4 sophomore Jeff Samardzija (7 for 53), who also was a standout with the Irish baseball squad this past spring as a pitcher. Shelton is the team's fastest receiver and made great strides late last season. Samardzija was widely considered one of the top performers of spring practice, in spite of his busy schedule. Sophomore Chase Anastasio has the tools needed to become a key receiver and will continue to develop as he gains experience. Rangy freshman signee Chris Vaughn (6-4, 205) could get a chance to make an impact.

TIGHT END: The Irish do not lack options at tight end, as six players have the ability and experience to make a difference this season. Of particular value is the return of a pair of fifth-year veterans and two-time letterwinners Billy Palmer (1 for 13) and Jared Clark (15 for 142) along with junior Anthony Fasano (18 for 169, 2 TDs).

Palmer earned the starting nod in nine contests in 2003, ranking as a two-time letterwinner and a top-

flight blocker. Clark (he started twice in 2003) is a former quarterback who adds plenty of all-around athletic ability. Fasano earned a pair of starting assignments and gradually developed into the best pass-catching threat of the group.

Other potential contributors are junior letterman Marcus Freeman (he made 165 special teams appearances in 2003), sophomore John Carlson (DNP in 2003), who played with the Irish basketball squad once football ended – and fifth-year veteran Jerome Collins (he has earned letters the last two years as a reserve outside linebacker, playing in all 12 games in 2003 and making 142 special teams appearances).

CENTER: The center position appears in good hands, based on the emergence of talented sophomore John Sullivan, the return of junior returning starter Bob Morton, and the presence of senior letterwinner Zach Giles.

Sullivan, a former Parade prep All-American, did-

Offensive Tackles

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*Harris, Ryan	6-5	285	So.	215:05
*Ryan, Jamie	6-5	307	Jr.	121:40
Mattes, Brian	6-5	285	Jr.	8:41
*Raridon, Scott	6-6	300	Jr.	6:18

n't play at all as a rookie in 2003 but had an impressive spring that vaulted him into the starting role, allowing Morton to lend his considerable experience and talent to left guard.

Giles made one start and six appearances overall last fall after heading into fall camp neck and neck with Morton for the first-team slot and will compete for a significant role there this season.

Morton started 11 times in 2003 and should evolve more into a leadership role up front with a full year's experience in the lineup now on his resume, but the outlook heading into the fall appears to have him set as an emergency starter while playing left guard.

OFFENSIVE GUARD: Both starters from 2003 return in seniors Mark LeVoi (he played more minutes than anyone else on offense in 2003 while starting all 12 games at left guard) and Dan Stevenson (he started the first four weeks at right tackle, then opened in six of the last eight contests at left guard). Those two are far and away the most experienced of the returnees at either guard position.

Bob Morton also could contend for a starting role at left guard, depending on the development of John Sullivan at center and the health of the returning starters. There are two other lettermen battling for playing time in senior Darin Mitchell (he played in seven games in 2003, starting at right guard vs. Michigan State) and junior Jamie Ryan (he earned three starts at right guard, playing in nine games overall). Senior Jeff Thompson (one game appearance in 2003) is yet another candidate

OFFENSIVE TACKLE: The right tackle slot appears in good hands for years to come with sophomore Ryan Harris returning. He started the last eight games at that position for the Irish as a rookie – and it probably was no accident that running back Julius Jones averaged 139.5 yards per game during that stretch. Harris earned freshman All-America honors in 2003 and figures to be an all-star stalwart for the Irish in coming seasons.

Defensive End

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
** Tuck, Justin	6-5	239	Sr.	225:22
*Abiamiri, Victor	6-4	265	So.	189:46
*** Budinscak, Kyle	6-4	270	Sr.	154:55
*Leitko, Travis	6-6	267	Jr.	31:55
Frome, Chris	6-5	268	So.	4:30
Stephenson, Dwight, Jr.	6-2	236	So.	---

Defensive Tackles/Nose Guards

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
** Pauly, Greg	6-6	295	Sr.	130:28
*Landri, Derek	6-2	281	Jr.	73:45
*Beidatsch, Brian	6-2	297	Sr.	42:53
Laws, Trevor	6-0	289	So.	---

The left tackle job ranks as the lone vacancy on the offensive line (that's where graduated Jim Molinaro played as anchor of the 2003 line). Junior Brian Mattes (he played on the defensive line as a rookie, then shifted to offense a year ago) should have a solid chance to emerge as the frontrunner there after playing in nine games last fall as Molinaro's top backup.

With Harris the lone returning letterman at either tackle position, others in the picture include juniors Scott Raridon (he saw action in 11 games in 2003, mostly via special teams) and James Bonelli (one game appearance in 2003).

DEFENSIVE END: The Irish are as strong at defensive end as probably any area of the roster, thanks to the return of senior sack record-setter Justin Tuck (73 tackles, 19 TFL, 13.5 sacks, 3 forced fumbles), fifth-year veteran Kyle Budinscak (17 tackles, 4 TFL, 3 sacks, 1 fumble recovery), plus potential star sophomore Victor Abiamiri (22 tackles, 4 TFL, 1 sack).

Tuck's 13.5 sacks in 2003 set the single-season standard in the Notre Dame record book, as he has developed into a top-flight all-around defender (only Brandon Hoyte with 74 made more tackles in 2003 among returnees for 2004) as well as a potent rusher off the edge. Budinscak contributes a healthy shot of moxie, while also twice earning all-academic honors. Abiamiri made six starts as a rookie in 2003 and displayed some of the same first-year abilities eventual all-star Anthony Weaver showed when he broke into the Irish lineup in his 1998 rookie campaign.

That trio will have help from two-time letterwinner Brian Beidatsch (5 tackles in 10 games played in 2003), along with junior letterman Travis Leitko (12 tackles, 1.5 TFL, 1 sack, 1 forced fumble in 10 2003 games) and classmate Chris Frome (played 5 games in 2003 with 36 special-team appearances).

DEFENSIVE TACKLE: There are a couple of major holes to fill up the middle of the Notre Dame defense, with the departure of stalwarts Darrell Campbell (a three-year starter there; 25 tackles in 2003) at tackle and Cedric Hilliard (27 tackles, 1.5 TFL in 2003) at nose guard.

However, the Irish aren't devoid of experience at those two spots, with fifth-year tackle Greg Pauly (20 tackles, 6.5 TFL, 3 sacks in 2003; started vs. Pittsburgh and USC among 11 games played) qualifying as the veteran of the group. He'll have an oppor-

Outside Linebackers

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*** Curry, Derek	6-3	234	Sr.	258:58
** Mays, Corey	6-1	244	Sr.	47:16
*Salvador, Anthony	6-2	229	Jr.	5:19
Brockington, Joe	6-1	226	So.	---

Inside Linebackers

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*** Goolsby, Mike	6-4	248	Sr.	---
** Hoyte, Brandon	5-11	230	Sr.	206:52
Borseti, Nick	6-4	236	So.	---

tunity to come into his own as a full-time contributor in 2004.

Battling for the nose guard job will be letterwinning junior Derek Landri (13 tackles, 4 TFL, 1 fumble recovery; started vs. Washington State among 10 games played in 2003) and sophomore Trevor Laws (DNP in 2003 as a rookie).

INSIDE LINEBACKER: Notre Dame must replace two-time leading tackler Courtney Watson (team-leading 117 tackles, 15 TFL, 3.5 sacks, 2 ints. in 2003) from the mix at inside linebacker – but the Irish will do it with a proven performer in fifth-year veteran and potential all-star Mike Goolsby. Watson and Goolsby played side by side inside in 2002 (with Goolsby ranking third overall in tackles and tops in tackles for loss), then Goolsby (75 tackles, 4 sacks, 13 TFL in 2002) sat out all of 2003 after breaking his collarbone in the 2003 Gator Bowl.

Goolsby figures to pair in 2004 with yet another experienced hand in senior returning regular Brandon Hoyte (74 tackles, 7.5 TFL, 2 sacks, 1 fumble recovery), who played next to Watson inside in 2003 in Goolsby's absence. Hoyte qualifies as the leading returning Irish tackler for the 2004 season and is one of the hardest hitters on the team. He has a nose for the football and has developed a total understanding of the defense, factors that could translate into a big season this fall.

The lone other experienced returnee inside is senior Corey Mays, who has the size, strength and speed to develop into a force. He played with more confidence in the spring, showing the ability to be a playmaker. Waiting to get their feet wet are sophomores Dwight Stephenson and Nick Borsetti, neither of whom played as rookies in 2003.

OUTSIDE LINEBACKER: Two-year starter Derek Curry returns at outside linebacker to provide a solid dose of savvy and experience – and he'll join with Hoyte and Goolsby inside to provide a top-flight linebacking trio for the Irish in 2004. Curry's versatility (he can play any of the three linebacker positions) and his experience make him a vital member of the defense.

With Jerome Collins moving to tight end for his final season, sophomore Mitchell Thomas (DNP in 2003) is projected as the top backup outside. Thomas is a rangy, athletic player who could work into the regular rotation as he gains experience. Sophomore Joe Brockington had an excellent spring and could develop a role as the season progresses.

CORNERBACK: Back in the fold at corner is one returning regular in senior speedster Dwight Ellick,

Cornerbacks

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
*** Ellick, Dwight	5-10	183	Sr.	178:19
*** Jackson, Preston	5-9	176	Sr.	172:51
*Richardson, Mike	5-11	188	So.	32:38
** Campbell, Carlos	5-11	197	Sr.	12:33
*Ndukwe, Chinedum	6-2	219	So.	13:17+
Wooden, Ambrose	5-11	188	So.	---
Gardner, Isaiah	5-11	192	So.	---

+ - playing time at wide receiver

Safeties

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	'03 Time
** Burrell, Quentin	6-0	187	Sr.	265:35
** Bolen, Lionel	6-0	206	Sr.	49:16
*Parish, Freddie IV	6-0	201	So.	27:16
Carney, Jake	6-0	186	Jr.	---
Zbikowski, Tom	5-11	202	So.	---
Hedgemon, LaBrose	5-9	183	So.	---

plus a part-time starter in fifth-year returnee Preston Jackson. Those two are the sole names with any appreciable experience on the 2004 roster. Ellick is one of the team's fastest players and will strive to develop into a true cover corner this season. Jackson is one of the team's headiest, most experienced players.

There are plenty of other candidates for duty at corner, including senior Carlos Campbell, junior Mike Richardson and sophomores Isaiah Gardner, Labrose Hedgemon and converted wide receiver Ambrose Wooden (none of those three played as rookies in 2003). Campbell is a physical corner who is just beginning to reach his potential. Richardson has impressed the coaches with his instinctive style of play and provides another physical cover corner. Gardner and Hedgemon are excellent athletes who need experience to develop, with Gardner one of the team's fastest players.

SAFETY: Senior free safety Quentin Burrell qualifies as one of the anchors of the Irish secondary based on his experience, while senior Lionel Bolen stands as the top name on the depth chart at strong safety. Burrell gives the Irish an experienced "coach on the field" type of player. Bolen's extensive playing experience affords him opportunities to make plays.

Others in the mix are junior Jake Carney and sophomore Tom Zbikowski (DNP in 2003) at free safety, along with up-and-coming sophomores Freddie Parish and Chinedum Ndukwe (switched to safety from wide receiver). Carney could battle for action as he gains experience, but Zbikowski was one of the sensations of spring practice, displaying a hard-nosed mentality and playmaking ability. Both Parish and Ndukwe have bright futures. Both are physical players with good closing speed.

KICKING GAME: With combination place-kicker/punter Nicholas Setta lost to injury the last half of the 2003 campaign, the Irish filled the bill with another combo kicker in senior D.J. Fitzpatrick, who returns for the 2004 season. There are no other scholarship placekickers on the Notre Dame roster, but sophomore Geoff Price (DNP in 2003 as a rookie) enters the fall in the lead for the punting assignment.

Fitzpatrick connected on 12-of-17 field goal attempts in 2003 and was 17-of-18 in conversion

Kickers/Punters

Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	App.
Cardillo, Craig	6-0	169	Jr.	*
Fitzpatrick, D.J.	6-1	195	Sr.	142 app.
Gioia, Carl	5-10	180	So.	---
Price, Geoffrey	6-3	194	So.	---
Renkes, Bobby	6-0	188	So.	---

kicks. The walk-on made one game-winning kick (vs. Navy) and enters 2004 riding a string of eight consecutive successful field goal attempts. Also competing for the starting placements job will be junior Craig Cardillo, sophomore Carl Gioia and sophomore Bobby Renkes.

Price has shown impressive ability at punter, often launching booming punts. He averaged 45.8 yards on six attempts in the Blue-Gold Game in April. If he can improve his overall consistency and his directional punting, he could be a major weapon in field position for the Irish. Fitzpatrick will compete with Price for the punting chores after handling the job for much of last season in place of Setta. Also in the mix at punter could be Gioia and Renkes.

The Irish return game will undergo a makeover this season. Notre Dame loses two of the top return men in its history in Vontez Duff and Julius Jones. But there is hope that top replacements will emerge from a host of talented players. Rhema McKnight has experience at punt returner while speedy Dwight Ellick and Matt Shelton could provide a threat on kickoffs.



Senior linebacker Derek Curry returns to provide savvy and experience in his third season as a starter. Curry's versatility and experience make him a vital member of the defense. Photo by Lighthouse Imaging.

Projected Depth Chart

Here's the way Notre Dame will line up on the field when fall practice begins for the 2004 season. All listings are tentative and are based on ratings at the conclusion of spring practice. Playing times listed are from 2003 season. This prospective look does not include incoming freshmen who won't be positioned until fall drills commence.

Offense

Left Tackle						
68	*	Ryan Harris	6-5	285	So.	215:05
79		Brian Mattes	6-5	285	Jr.	8:41
54		David Fitzgerald	6-4	282	Jr.	—
Left Guard						
76	*	Bob Morton	6-4	298	Jr.	265:54
72		Jeff Thompson	6-4	294	Sr.	5:51
50	*	Dan Santucci	6-4	289	Jr.	1:13
Center						
78		John Sullivan	6-3	288	So.	—
55	*	Zachary Giles	6-3	285	Sr.	60:55
Right Guard						
74	**	Dan Stevenson	6-5	293	Sr.	207:13
51	*	Jamie Ryan	6-5	307	Jr.	121:40
69	*	Darin Mitchell	6-3	287	Sr.	45:23
71		James Bonelli	6-4	272	Jr.	2:26
Right Tackle						
73	*	Mark LeVoir	6-7	317	Sr.	311:40
62	*	Scott Raridon	6-6	300	Jr.	6:18
59		James Bent	6-1	261	Jr.	—
Tight End						
85	**	Billy Palmer	6-3	257	Sr.	173:14
1	**	Jared Clark	6-4	244	Sr.	95:54
89		John Carlson	6-5	240	So.	—
87	*	Marcus Freeman	6-2	245	Jr.	5:45
48	**	Jerome Collins	6-4	255	Sr.	33:26
88	*	Anthony Fasano	6-4	249	Jr.	102:07

Wide Receiver						
5	**	Rhema McKnight	6-1	208	Jr.	205:05
23		Chase Anastasio	6-1	202	So.	—
or 82	**	Matt Shelton	6-0	172	Sr.	21:15
84		Mike O'Hara	5-9	177	Jr.	—
Quarterback						
10	*	Brady Quinn	6-4	220	So.	250:53
9	*	Pat Dillingham	6-2	210	Sr.	2:04
16		Stan Revelle	5-11	191	Sr.	—
17		J.J. Warren	6-1	184	So.	—
Fullback						
16	**	Rashon Powers-Neal	6-2	237	Sr.	74:55
12	*	Josh Schmidt	6-1	226	Sr.	72:58
25		Nate Schiccatano	6-2	236	Jr.	5:11
35		Ashley McConnell	5-11	238	So.	—
28	*	Cole Laux	5-10	240	Sr.	—
Running Back						
4	***	Ryan Grant	6-1	211	Sr.	146:01
11	**	Marcus Wilson	5-11	201	Sr.	16:49
26		Travis Thomas	6-0	208	So.	—
32		Jeff Jenkins	6-0	215	Jr.	—
Wide Receiver						
7	***	Carlyle Holiday	6-3	221	Sr.	82:48
21	**	Maurice Stovall	6-5	224	Jr.	190:48
83	*	Jeff Samardzija	6-5	208	So.	35:32
84		Rob Woods	6-2	205	Jr.	—

X

LT

LG

C

RG

RT

TE

Z

QB

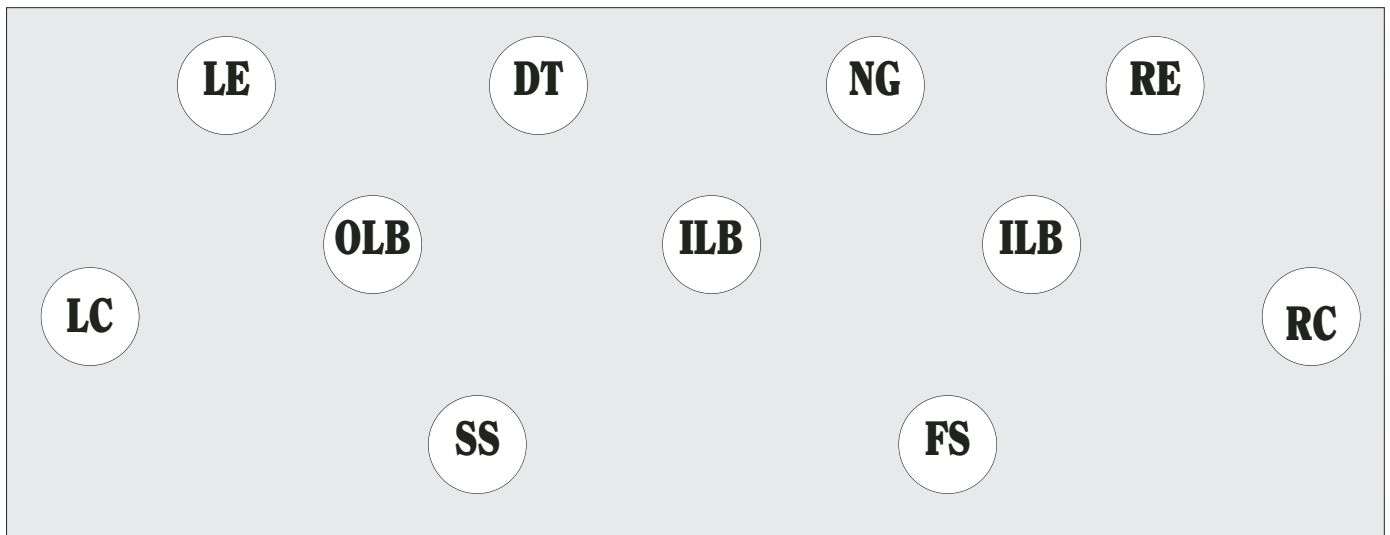
FB

HB

Defense

End						
44	**	Justin Tuck	6-5	239	Sr.	225:22
75		Chris Frome	6-5	268	Jr.	4:30
57		Dwight Stephenson, Jr.	6-2	236	So.	—
Nose Guard						
66	*	Derek Landri	6-2	281	Jr.	73:45
98		Trevor Laws	6-0	289	So.	—
96		Matt Hasbrook	6-2	281	Sr.	—
Tackle						
77	**	Greg Pauly	6-6	295	Sr.	130:28
90	**	Brian Beidatsch	6-2	297	Sr.	42:53
End						
92	***	Kyle Budinscak	6-4	270	Sr.	154:55
95	*	Victor Abiamiri	6-4	265	So.	189:46
97	*	Travis Leitko	6-6	267	Jr.	31:55
Outside Linebacker						
49	***	Derek Curry	6-3	234	Sr.	258:58
47		Mitchell Thomas	6-3	229	So.	—
43	*	Anthony Salvador	6-2	229	Jr.	5:19
Inside Linebacker						
41	***	Mike Goolsby	6-4	248	Sr.	—
46	**	Corey Mays	6-1	244	Sr.	47:16
56		Nick Borseti	6-4	236	So.	—

Inside Linebacker						
39	**	Brandon Hoyte	5-11	230	Sr.	206:52
52		Joe Brockington	6-1	226	So.	—
Cornerback						
24	***	Dwight Ellick	5-10	183	Sr.	178:19
15	***	Preston Jackson	5-9	176	Sr.	172:51
30	*	Mike Richardson	5-11	188	Jr.	32:38
22		Ambrose Wooden	5-11	188	So.	—
Cornerback						
6	**	Carlos Campbell	5-11	197	Sr.	12:33
20		Isaiah Gardner	5-11	192	So.	—
29		LaBrose Hedgemon II	5-9	183	So.	—
37		Matt Mitchell	5-9	182	Jr.	—
Strong Safety						
27	**	Lionel Bolen	6-0	206	Sr.	49:16
2	*	Freddie Parish IV	6-0	201	So.	27:16
18	*	Chinedum Ndukwe	6-2	219	So.	13:17
Free Safety						
8	**	Quentin Burrell	6-0	187	Sr.	265:35
9		Tom Zbikowski	5-11	202	So.	—
31		Jake Carney	6-0	186	Jr.	—



Special Teams

Placekicker/Kickoffs						
19	*	D.J. Fitzpatrick	6-1	195	Sr.	142 app.
45		Carl Gioia	5-10	180	So.	—
Punter						
17		Geoffrey Price	6-3	194	So.	—
19	*	D.J. Fitzpatrick	6-1	195	Sr.	142 app.
Holder						
82	**	Matt Shelton	6-0	172	Sr.	86 app.
9	*	Pat Dillingham	6-2	210	Sr.	—
17		Geoffrey Price	6-3	194	So.	—

Kickoff Returner						
24	***	Dwight Ellick	5-10	183	Sr.	64 app.
82	**	Matt Shelton	6-0	172	Sr.	86 app.
5	**	Rhema McKnight	6-1	208	Jr.	20 app.
7	***	Carlyle Holiday	6-3	221	Sr.	—
		Ambrose Wooden				
		Travis Thomas				
Punt Returner						
24	***	Dwight Ellick	5-10	183	Sr.	64 app.
82	**	Matt Shelton	6-0	172	Sr.	86 app.
5	**	Rhema McKnight	6-1	208	Jr.	20 app.
7	***	Carlyle Holiday	6-3	221	Sr.	—
Snapper						
62	*	Scott Raridon (K)	6-6	300	Jr.	52 app.
64	*	Casey Dunn (P)	6-4	256	Sr.	76 app.

2004 Notre Dame Football Facts

Coaching Staff

Head Coach: Tyrone Willingham (Michigan State '77)

Record at Notre Dame: 15-10 (.600) (Two seasons)

Career Record: 59-46-1, .556 (Nine seasons)

Assistant Coaches: Bill Diedrick (Eastern Washington '70), offensive coordinator/quarterbacks; Kent Baer (Utah State '73), defensive coordinator; Mike Denbrock (Grand Valley State '86), offensive line – tackles/tight ends; Greg Mattison (Wisconsin-LaCrosse '71), defensive line/recruiting coordinator; John McDonell (Carroll College '81), offensive line – centers/guards; Trent Miles (Indiana State '87), receivers; Buzz Preston (Hawaii '82), running backs/special teams; Bob Simmons (Bowling Green '71), linebackers; Steven Wilks (Appalachian State '92), secondary

Strength and Conditioning Coach: Mickey Marotti (West Liberty State '87)

Director of Football Operations: Erica Genise (Iowa '93)

Director of Football Personnel Development: Jimmy Gonzalez (Texas Lutheran '81)

Graduate Assistant Coaches: Chad Klunder (Wartburg '95), D.J. Durkin (Bowling Green '01)

2004 Outlook

Offense: Multiple **Defense:** 4-3

2003 Record: Won 5, Lost 7 (Home 3-3, Away 2-4)

Lettermen Lost: 19 overall: 9 offense, 9 defense, 1 specialist

Lettermen Returning: 47 overall: 26 offense, 20 defense, 1 specialist

Starters Lost: 9; OFFENSE (3): LT Jim Molinaro, RB Julius Jones, WR Omar Jenkins; DEFENSE (5): DT Darrell Campbell, NG Cedric Hilliard, ILB Courtney Watson, CB Vontez Duff, SS Garron Bible; SPECIALISTS (1): PK/P Nicholas Setta

Starters Returning: 15; OFFENSE (8): LG Mark LeVoir, C Bob Morton, RG Dan Stevenson, RT Ryan Harris, TE Billy Palmer, WR Rhema McKnight, QB Brady Quinn, FB Rashon Powers-Neal; DEFENSE (6): DE Kyle Budinscak, DE Justin Tuck, LB Derek Curry, LB Brandon Hoyte, FS Quentin Burrell, CB Dwight Ellick; SPECIALISTS (1): PK/P D.J. Fitzpatrick

Top Losses

• **DT Darrell Campbell** (Three-year starter on the Irish defensive line, posted 25 tackles, 6.5 tackles for loss and three sacks in '03)

• **CB/KR Vontez Duff** (Two-year starter at cornerback, finished third on the all-time career kick return list with 1,955 yards, had 33 tackles and two interceptions in '03)

• **FS Glenn Earl** (Two-year hard-hitting starter for the Irish at strong and free safety, finished career with 169 tackles and four interceptions)

• **NG Cedric Hilliard** (Two-year starter, registered 27 tackles, 1.5 tackles for loss, forced two fumbles and recovered another in '03)

• **WR Omar Jenkins** (36 catches, 344 yards in '03, finished 18th on the all-time career receiving list, team captain)

• **RB Julius Jones** (Team MVP in '03, rushed for 1,268 yards in '03, scored 10 touchdowns in '03 and 26 in his career, finished in fourth place on the all-time career rushing list)

• **LT Jim Molinaro** (Started all 12 games in '03, second on team in minutes played with 309:07, team captain, earned Guardian of the Year Award)

• **PK/P Nicholas Setta** (holds Notre Dame record by going 16 consecutive games with a field goal, converted 92 consecutive extra point kicks to end his career, 9-of-10 in field goals in '03 before season-ending injury)

• **ILB Courtney Watson** ('02 Butkus Award finalist led team in tackles in '02 and '03, compiled 117 tackles, 15 tackles for a loss, 3.5 sacks and two interceptions in '03, '02 first-team All-American)

Top Returnees

• **DE Kyle Budinscak** (Started eight games before sidelined with an injury in '03, has six sacks and 10 tackles for a loss in his career, three-time academic all-district selection)

• **FS Quentin Burrell** (Moved into the starting line up in '03, eventually starting nine contests, fifth on the team in tackles with 58, led team with four interceptions)

• **OLB Derek Curry** (Fourth on the team with 66 tackles in '03, started all 12 games at OLB in '03, has 14.5 tackles for loss and 8.5 sacks in career)

• **PK/P D.J. Fitzpatrick** (Replaced injured Nicholas Setta at midseason and finished second on team in scoring, converted 12-of-17 field goals and 17-of-18 PAT kicks)

• **RB Ryan Grant** (Rushed for 1,085 yards in '02, boasts 13 career rushing touchdowns and 18 starts)

• **ILB Brandon Hoyte** (Finished second on the team in tackles for '03 with 74, has made 11 starts over the last two years, two-time academic all-district pick)

• **WR Rhema McKnight** (Led '03 team with 47 receptions for 600 yards, scored three touchdowns)

• **QB Brady Quinn** (Started nine games as a true freshman in '03, set Notre Dame freshman record with 1,831 yards and added nine touchdown passes)

• **DE Justin Tuck** (Set Notre Dame single-season record and ranked sixth in nation with 13.5 sacks in '03, boasts 18.5 sacks and 29 tackles for a loss in career, All-America candidate in '04)



Senior safety Quentin Burrell returns to anchor the Notre Dame secondary. Photo by Lighthouse Imaging.