

## Pregame QB issue distracts players

The focus on Jimmy Clausen has been hard for the Irish to ignore.

By Mark Viera

**T**HE TALK-DOMINATING THIS WEEK has been about Jimmy Clausen, the so-called super recruit making his first collegiate start for Notre Dame tomorrow. Reporters wanted to know everything about Jimmy. How will he fare in the steamy nighttime contest? Will those white-wearing fans get into his head? Is he mature enough for all this?



MY OPINION

At a Wednesday press conference, three Notre Dame players, none of whom were named Jimmy Clausen, fielded eight questions about ... Jimmy Clausen.

And it's not as if they were a bunch of backups. There was John Carlson, who could be an All-America tight end this year; John Sullivan, who could be an All-America center; and Travis Thomas, a senior captain.

Still, a little more than 20 percent of the questions contained the word "Jimmy," "quarterback" or essentially implied as much, leading the general conversation.

Frustration was manifestly absent from their lips, but it was palpable in their tone. This whole quarterback thing has been annoying.

"We have had a lot of practice with distraction from the media, I guess," Carlson said. "It's not a distraction, and we support all three quarterbacks, and it really doesn't matter who is in there. This week isn't any different than the past four or five weeks. So, no, it hasn't been a distraction."

Notre Dame has had a lot of time to deal with the issue the past few weeks.

Coach Charlie Weis kept the status of his three-man quarterback contest a secret, playing a coy game with the media throughout the summer. In turn, reporters raised even more questions about the status of Clausen's surgically repaired elbow and if Notre Dame had legitimate strength at the quarterback position.

Now that Clausen's been named the starter for Penn State, everyone wanted the full story on him. Thus, attention this week has been squarely focused on the 19-year-old.

You wonder what he's been thinking about this week before going to bed. Granted the kid has played on national TV and in front of mammoth high school crowds.

But Beaver Stadium at night? Against a No. 14 Penn State team that might have one of the nation's top defenses? That's a tall

See COLUMN: VIERA, Page 15.



Nathan A. Smith/Collegian

Notre Dame quarterbacks coach Ron Powlis instructs true freshman Jimmy Clausen at practice in South Bend yesterday. Clausen was named starting quarterback for the Fighting Irish for tomorrow's contest with Penn State after going 4 for 6 for 34 yards as a backup in Notre Dame's 33-3 loss last weekend.

## Recovery begins at practice

By Kevin Horan  
 COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER | kjh5017@psu.edu

**SOUTH BEND, Ind.** — What's the best way to cope with a tough loss? If you're on Charlie Weis' team, you have to get back on the practice field.

A team that loses a Saturday game goes through a process, the Notre Dame head coach said yesterday, five days after his team's crushing, 33-3 defeat at the hands of Georgia Tech. That process begins when players return home from the game, and their families and roommates are miserable. Sundays aren't any better.

"You go to church, and everybody says, 'Well, what happened?'" Weis said.

The players' misery continues through Monday meetings, through

dinnertime at the campus dining hall. Weis even has to field questions about the game from his neighbors when he takes out his garbage.

Then 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday rolls around. It's time for the Irish to practice again, to stop dealing with the psychological and emotional effects of their loss and physically kick their bodies into high gear. When Weis met with reporters at the conclusion of yesterday's practice, he was satisfied — he'd held his team to a high standard all week and kept the practice tempo high.

"It's been one of the most physical weeks that I've seen since we've been here," senior safety Tom Zbikowski said at a press conference yesterday, while seated to the left of senior linebacker Maurice Crum Jr.

At the end of every Thursday practice, the Irish run a two-minute drill. Junior quarterback Evan Sharpley has been running it during the past couple weeks, but yesterday, freshman Jimmy Clausen got the ball because he'll be starting against No. 14 Penn State tomorrow at Beaver Stadium.

Weis knows how loud it will be when Clausen tries to drive the Irish down the field tomorrow night, so he decided to fill the Loftus Sports Center with the blaring sounds of Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen yesterday while Clausen ran the two-minute drill. That, Weis said, forces Clausen to pull the huddle in tight enough for his entire offense to hear what he has to say.

"You can't hear, literally," Weis said

"You go to church, and everybody says, 'Well, what happened?'"

Charlie Weis  
 Notre Dame Head Coach

of the noise-flooded practice facility. "If I said something to you right here, you can't hear. You actually have to get the huddle really tight."

This year's Notre Dame team is younger than last year's, prompting Weis to change how he approaches the practices themselves. Last year's veteran group could endure a vicious practice. Now, Weis has to pick and choose how he lashes out.

See RECOVERY, Page 15.



Daniel Freest/Collegian File Photo

Notre Dame's Chinedum Ndukwe (18) intercepts a pass intended for Penn State's Derrick Williams (2) in Penn State's 41-17 loss at South Bend last year.

## Offense wiser after '06 debacle

By Mark Viera  
 COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER | mv5009@psu.edu

Penn State was sloppy and all together unimpressive last season at Notre Dame. Quarterback Anthony Morelli was exposed, looking fully blighted and dazed, and the Nittany Lions could only take solace in a rushing game that pounded out 158 yards.

Morelli admitted after last week's game against Florida International that the Lions "might not have been ready" for the Fighting Irish in '06.

"I'm just more experienced, more of a leader now," said Morelli, who was 21 of 33 for 189 yards, a touchdown and an interception last year

against Notre Dame. "I know the offense a lot better. I'm just more comfortable."

This year, No. 14 Penn State (1-0) will have to adjust to Notre Dame's 3-4 defense, an atypical style the Lions are not used to facing.

The 3-4 generally puts more pressure on the quarterback. The outside linebackers, who can both start the play at the line of scrimmage, either pass rush or drop into coverage.

In their favor, the Lions are a year older and improved in some key offensive spots, and the Notre Dame defense is fresh off last week's 33-3 drubbing by Georgia Tech.

"Well, I think the best part was our

See OFFENSE, Page 15.

## Running game linemen's priority

By Corey McLaughlin  
 COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER | cpm167@psu.edu

Georgia Tech's Tashard Choice ran around, over and through the Notre Dame defense last week, gathering 196 yards and two touchdowns on 26 carries.

The Penn State offensive line can only hope it provides the same

opportunities for Austin Scott — or whoever is lined up in the Nittany Lions' backfield.

"We've taken a lot of looks at that tape," center A.Q. Shipley said of the Notre Dame-Georgia Tech game. "That's what we've been looking at. We're just going to continue with our game plan, look at what they did and go from there."

Last week, the Lions' revamped offensive line started slow and showed signs of nervousness against an active Florida International defensive line. Scott and backup Rodney Kinlaw combined for 38 yards in the first two quarters, while quarterback Anthony Morelli lit up the Golden Panthers through the air.

"There was a lot of gaffes along the offensive line, one person here, one person there making a mistake. When you're one person making one mistake here, it's the difference," Shipley said.

In the second half, the line, which features four players starting in new positions this season, handled FIU's middle slants and stunts well, as Penn State running backs gained 180 yards in the final two quarters. Third-stringer Evan Royster led the team with 80 rushing yards.

But tomorrow, Penn State will face a different set of challenges from the Irish defensive line, Notre Dame coach Charlie Weis said.

"One of our biggest problems last week was really the outside

See LINEMEN, Page 15.



Andrew Lala/Collegian File Photo

Penn State's offensive line waits for the snap against the Irish last year.

### The Daily Collegian Football Writers Predict:



McLaughlin Viera Horan

Score	PSU	ND	PSU	ND	PSU	ND
	24	13	31	3	21	13
What's Good	No one will be able to hear anything		PSU rushing improves vs. weak Irish D		Lions defense confuses ND QB Clausen	
What's Bad	Too much jumping for the Beav		Over-hyped meeting turns into a blowout		PSU RBs need time to warm up	
What To Look For	Record crowd on hand for "Whitehouse"		Any soul not wearing white in the stadium		Morelli throws 1st quarter touchdown	