

## ND Football Awards Show Wrap

Written by Sean Stires

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NOTRE DAME, Ind. – In a season in which the Notre Dame football team has managed to wake up the echoes, the team's 2012 football awards banquet was fittingly called "The Echoes" on Friday night. A total of 16 awards were presented as the Irish celebrated their 12-0 regular season at the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center on the edge of the Notre Dame campus.

To nobody's surprise, Manti Te'o was named team MVP at the end of the night. Te'o has had the most successful awards week a college defensive player has ever had by hauling-in six trophies for his play already. He spoke briefly to his team via a satellite video feed from New York, where he will find out on Saturday if he is the Heisman Trophy winner.

John Mackey Award-winning tight end was named ND's Offensive Player of the Year, while Zeke Motta earned Defensive Player of the Year recognition. Head coach Brian Kelly commended Motta's leadership in a secondary that included Defensive Newcomer of the year KeiVarae Russell at cornerback and converted wide receiver Matthias Farley at safety.

Like Farley, Offensive Newcomer of the Year Everett Golson did not see a snap as a freshman in 2011. Golson, but they each played prominent roles in the miraculous season the Irish have had so far.

"It's very exciting to win this award," Golson said afterward. "It's all credit to God and my family and these wonderful players that I'm playing with. I'm definitely happy."

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Golson has passed for 2,135 yards and 11 touchdowns and rushed for 305 yards and five more scores. His left tackle, Zack Martin, was named the team's Offensive Lineman of the Year. Another offensive lineman, Mike Golic, Jr., received the Irish Around the Bend Award for his work in the community, while center Braxton Cave took home the Father Bernard Lang Award for his strength and conditioning and for overcoming injury.

A pair of awards was each shared by a pair of teammates. Receivers Robby Toma and John Goodman were the Nick Petrosante Teammate recipients. The honor goes to the player(s) who exemplify courage, teamwork, loyalty, and pride. Louis Nix III and Stephon Tuitt split the Moose Krause Lineman of the Year Award.

"I'd like to thank my mother for this award," Nix said on stage after receiving his accolade. "She had a beautiful son and he's here today."

Nix said afterward that he has 11 brothers. He was outwardly happy to receive the first of what he hopes are more to come.

"I really never got an award in college yet," Nix said. "This is the start. Next year I'm trying to be like Manti. I'm trying to get like seven or eight of these awards, so it's the start."

Nix led all Irish defensive linemen with 45 tackles this season, while Tuitt had 42 tackles with a team-best 12.0 sacks.

"We had a crazy year together," Tuitt said of how he and Nix performed on the line this season. "(There were) a lot of combined tackles we had falling on some people that are like 500 (pounds) plus. It's just really exciting to get this award with him and I know he's happy."

A good deal of the night's award had a "team" theme. Kapron Lewis Moore took the A-Team Award for accountability, appreciation and achievement, Theo Riddick was presented the Count On Me Award for being unselfish and reliable and Tommy Rees earned the Next Man In Award

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for “being ready to perform at the highest level when called upon” according to Kelly.

“It’s an honor to know that my teammates count on me,” Rees said afterward. “They have their trust in me to be able to go in there and help this team win when we needed to.”

Rees appeared in 11 of Notre Dame’s 12 games during the season after sitting out the opener due to suspension. He passed for a pair of touchdowns and ran for another while helping the Irish to hard fought wins over Purdue and Michigan. Finals are next week for Rees and the rest of the team, but he says his mind is elsewhere right now.

“To be honest Alabama,” Rees laughed when asked if he was thinking more about finals or his next opponent. “I’ve only got a couple semesters left, so finals are...I know how to prepare for them and know how to get through them, so our focus right now is on Alabama.”

Other award winners were Danny Spond (Rockne Student-Athlete Award), Kyle Brindza (Special Teams Player of the Year), Tyler Stockton (Defensive Scout Team Player of the Year), and Mishawaka native Nick Fitzpatrick (Offensive Scout Team Player of the Year).