



FT. LAUDERDALE, Fla. – A second day of press conferences brought new faces in front of the microphones on Friday in the countdown to Monday’s BCS Championship Game. Offensive Coordinator and quarterback Everett Golson shared the podium during Notre Dame’s extended Friday session before the team headed off to Nova Southeastern University for practice.

It did not take long for the subject of Alabama’s stout defense to come up. In fact, the first question for Martin was about Alabama’s 3-4 defensive scheme, which is actually in a 4-3 set the majority of the time. Martin noted Alabama’s “diverse” defense, but said there are helpful similarities to the one Bob Diaco runs at Notre Dame. That similarity helped his offense’s preparation over the last month.

“When you go against your starters a lot of times it’s good work, because you’re getting speed on speed and big guys on big guys,” Martin explained. “But the schemes are completely different. The nice thing preparing for us is that the fronts that both teams use, although multiple, it has helped us prepare, because we’ve got to see those every day in practice.”

What Martin and the Irish have not seen in practice though is the actual Alabama defense he will have to attack during Monday night’s game. It is a daunting task, considering the Crimson Tide leads the nation in both rushing defense and total defense, but there is another hidden stat that has Martin even more concerned.

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“They do a very good job of when they get you in 3<sup>rd</sup> and long,” Martin began. “I went through the 3<sup>rd</sup> and long (and) they’ve gotten more fumbles and interceptions and sacks than they’ve given up first downs on 3<sup>rd</sup> and seven-plus.”

“If you want to get demoralized if you’re a Notre Dame fan, watch the Alabama 3<sup>rd</sup> and seven-plus tape, which we did one morning, then we called it a day after that, because we were all demoralized. If they (Alabama opponents) punted on 3<sup>rd</sup> down the whole season against Alabama than actually going for it on 3<sup>rd</sup> and seven-plus (they would have been better off).”

Alabama’s only loss of the season came on Nov. 10 with a 29-24 setback to eventual Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Manziel and Texas A&M. The question now is what the Irish may have been able to glean from the Aggies’ game plan that can help the Irish attack Alabama’s defense. Martin says A&M’s early 21-0 advantage and success on 3<sup>rd</sup> downs were big keys that day.

“I don’t anticipate being up 21-0 in the first quarter,” Martin quipped. “But that would be absolutely nice if that would ever happen. Third downs were key for them and then their quarterback ad-libbing a little bit. When things weren’t there he made three or four plays.”

“We’re counting on him (Golson) doing the same thing for us,” Martin continued. “Then when we call a lousy play he just ad-libs a little bit – make something happen – which he has a tendency to do at times, which we really like.”

Martin and Golson were each asked if there are any weaknesses they see in Alabama’s that can be “personally” exploited. Martin answered in his own humorous fashion.

“I’m not playing dude,” Martin said after Golson asked if the question was directed at him. “The spread would be a lot higher if I was.”

Golson then gave his own diplomatic response.

“Like we’ve said time and again, Alabama has a great defense,” Golson began. “There are many things that they can do – talking about switching out from three down to four down, just simple things like that that you have to prepare for or you have to have it instituted.”

### **In The Red Zone**

Red zone success is likely to go a long way toward deciding Notre Dame’s success or failure in Monday’s game. The Irish have scored touchdowns on 46% of their 58 trips into the red zone this season, while Alabama’s defense leads the nation by allowing just 14 red zone touchdowns for a 63% success rate.

“It’s like any other part of the field,” Martin said of the red zone. “It’s execution. It’s playing physical. It’s the run game (by) carving out some space for our running backs and then obviously in the pass game giving Everett some time and then him making sure he figures out that coverage and where to get the ball and put it in the right place.”

Martin joked that there were not a lot of opponent red zone opportunities to scout while watching Alabama tape, because opponents did not reach the red zone a lot and when they did the Tide was up by “50 points” and had reserves in the game.

### **A Chance At History**

While Everett Golson is a sophomore in academic standing, he is considered a “freshman” by the college football world since he was a scout team player for the duration of his 2011 freshman season. He has a chance to join former Oklahoma quarterback Jamelle Holieway as just the second “freshman” quarterback to ever win a Division One national championship.

Martin had a freshman quarterback, Colin Finerty, win a Division Two title with him at Grand Valley State. Finerty went on to win three championships before his time was done.

“We’re hoping history repeats itself,” Martin chuckled. “Everybody is worried about that next one. We’re trying to make this the first of three, really.”

“No one thought that was coming today, huh,” Martin continued with a smile. “You guys are all too short-minded with your thinking. (I’m) trying to think big picture here.”

While Martin may be thinking about getting three titles, it is still Golson’s first appearance on the “big stage” that is the National Championship Game. The “big stage” is something that comes with the territory of being the Notre Dame quarterback.

“I think just the person that I am, I don’t really ride the wave too much,” Golson said of not getting too high or too low. “I’m kind of just focused on what’s played between the yard lines; what’s played on the field. I can’t really focus on everything that’s off the field, because that’s out of my control.”

## **Moving On Up?**

Bob Diaco is already considered a hot coaching commodity due to Notre Dame’s success this season, and if the Irish win those three titles Martin mentioned he is likely to become a commodity himself. Moving on to other opportunities is not something Martin says is on his radar right now though.

“I’ve always believed what my dad taught me,” Martin began after being asked about the “perfect gig” in FBS coaching opportunities. “Keep your head down and work hard and it’ll all sort itself out.”

“To me, keep working, keep winning and opportunities come and you evaluate the

opportunities,” he continued. “If it’s the right opportunity for your wife and kids you do it. If it’s not, you won’t.”

Martin, who was once a Division Two head coach at Grand Valley State, said fewer jobs are as appealing since he has been at Notre Dame than they would have been just three years ago. He says he would have “pinched himself” when he was at GVSU to get the kind of calls from schools that he has received since joining Brian Kelly’s current coaching staff.

“It’s been a fun opportunity,” Martin commented. “I try not to worry about it; otherwise it’ll drive you nuts.”

### **(Not) Very Superstitious**

Athletes, coaches and even fans are all known to have superstitions. From what food to eat before a game to how they tie their shoes or even a pregame “reversal of fortune” at the porcelain throne. However, neither Golson nor Martin profess to any pregame rituals.

“We try never to do the same thing twice, because then we can never be off schedule,” Martin said. “We can never...we didn’t put our socks on the right way today. There’s a lot of things that can creep in your mind and help you lose a game. We try to stay away from those.”

Martin said the only thing close to a superstition he has is having “really good players” in the locker room before a game. The first year Irish Offensive Coordinator that preparation breeds “luck”.

“If you prepare the right way and you do the right things all the time or your try to do things the right way all the time, none of us do it but we all try to, it seems like those teams get a lot luckier than other teams,” Martin said of the secret to being lucky. “There are certain people that have won a lot of games and there are certain players that have won a lot of games. The ones that lose never get deemed lucky, so the ones that win are always going to get deemed lucky.”

Notre Dame has been labeled by naysayers as “lucky” this season due to breaks that have gone its way. Two examples are the Stanford goal line stand and the pass interference call late in the Pitt game. Martin has his own retort to that.

“Was Pitt lucky maybe when we fumbled the ball going in with no one touchdown our tailback,” Martin asked aloud. “Was Pitt lucky maybe when we had an opportunity to throw an inside vertical in the first quarter to a guy wide open? There are hundreds of plays. You guys just tend to pick out one or two that you remember.”

Golson laughed beside Martin as his coach finished his thought.

### **Guidance For Golson**

Golson has likely heard more than his fair share of advice since starting his first college game four months ago. On Friday he shared the “best” advice he has received.

“The race is not given to the swift or the strong,” Golson began. “I’m paraphrasing, but it’s given to the one that endures to the end. We’re obviously the underdogs coming into this game, but I think that kind of really dissuades what we’re talking about going into the game.”

Golson concluded by saying that, while Alabama has a great team and defense, Monday’s game is “about who’s going to endure to the end and play hard for four quarters.”