

ISD Game Predictions: Alabama

Written by Mike Frank
Monday, 07 January 2013 09:46



It's that time again, and this is for all the marbles. The Irish have cleared every hurdle, avoided every roadblock and overcome mountains of doubt and adversity. The media hasn't given Notre Dame much of a chance in many of the games they've won this year. This game is no different. Do the Irish finally shut up all naysayers with tonight's performance?

MIKE FRANK

Brian Kelly says he doesn't believe in teams of destiny. I also don't believe in teams of destiny. But I believe in this team.

They're not pretty. They're not flashy. They're not South Beach.

This is a lunch pail group. They're blue-collared. They're all business.

Alabama is the pretty girl on the block, but there's also a lot of substance under that beauty.

I expect a classic. I know the Irish will show up in this game. I'm also certain the Crimson Tide

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will be prepared to play. It comes down to who wants it more and which team won't crumble when the game is on the line.

I've got to believe because this team has overcome every obstacle put in its path, and I don't believe Bama can out-effort Notre Dame.

Notre Dame: 24 Alabama: 20

CHRISTIAN MCCOLLUM

Maybe I've bought in to the idea of Notre Dame being a team of destiny, but I really do believe the Irish win this game.

I don't believe it's a lock and I wouldn't say I'm convinced, but like everybody else, I've thought about this game for a long time and every time I come to a conclusion, the Irish end up on top.

I believe Notre Dame's defense is too good for the Irish to be blown out and the longer they're in the game, the greater their odds of winning are. I see Everett Golson being the wildcard, making plays with his arm and his legs. Theo Riddick may be able to become an Irish legend if he's able to run tonight the way he's run most of the season. Obviously, Manti Te'o can cement a legacy of his own.

I didn't think Notre Dame would beat Oklahoma, but I said they could if they made two huge plays in the game. The first came with Cierre Wood's 62-yard touchdown run and the game was essentially over when Chris Brown hauled in his first career reception for 50 yards. I see the game playing out the same way, but after seeing the Irish prove it in Norman, I'm backing them in South Beach.

Notre Dame: 24 Alabama: 21

SEAN STIRES

Notre Dame came into this 2012 football season with plenty of questions. Who would be the quarterback? Could the Irish secondary stop anybody? Was the receiving corps capable? Could Brian Kelly move the needle farther than the 8-5 records he produced in each of his first two seasons? Those questions have all been answered and after a run of 12 consecutive victories this season there is only one question left to answer:

Can the Fighting Irish win the national championship?

After a month and a half wait we will all find out tonight. There are other questions for the Irish as they face Alabama tonight, like can the Irish defense that has been so good all season slow down a bludgeoning Crimson Tide rushing attack, is Everett Golson ready for the big stage and can he and the offense move the ball against a defense that is at least every bit as good as Notre Dame's.

Expect to see prominent players tonight on special teams units that have not packed much this season. I'm still going with Cierre Wood joining George Atkinson on kick returns and Theo Riddick back deep to take punts. Someone is going to need to make a big play.

Kelly has reiterated over and over that he thinks the team that wins the battle in the trenches will win the game and it is hard to argue with that. To go a step farther though, the game is likely to be won or lost in the red zone. Both Alabama's offense and defense are stellar in the red zone and Notre Dame's defense is great there too. The Irish offense is another story.

The Irish have kicked 19 field goals and scored 27 touchdowns this season in their 58 trips into the red zone. Notre Dame simply cannot settle for field goals as they did in their nine point win over USC that should have been decided by three touchdowns.

Kelly's Irish reclamation project started by building this team in the trenches. Many have

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compared Notre Dame's front seven to an SEC defense. The 2012 product has been one that has played many close games and then won in the 4th quarter. It is a team that is built to win the kind of games Alabama and LSU played twice last season – the final one in the national championship game.

On Monday night the Irish defense will rise to the occasion once again and the offense will again do enough to get the job done. The Irish won't just be compared to an SEC defense, they will be better than an SEC defense in helping claim the program's first 1988.

Notre Dame: 20 Alabama: 18

SEAN MELE

The BCS National Championship is a hard-fought battle and nothing comes easy for either team as defense is the name of the game tonight in Miami. Notre Dame finds themselves struggling to get anything going on the ground, but quarterback Everett Golson creates ways to move the Irish offense with his feet and arm. Golson is able to put pressure on the Crimson Tide defense and scores one rushing touchdown and throws another to TJ Jones. Unfortunately for Notre Dame, Alabama eventually gets their running game going, although they are held to under their season average of 221 yards. Eddie Lacy rushes for over 100 yards and scores both of the Tide's touchdowns.

The game moves into the fourth quarter with the score tied 14-14. Alabama gets the ball with just over two minutes left in the game after a Kyle Brindza missed field goal and quarterback AJ McCarron engineers a drive that puts the Tide in field-goal range. With 12 seconds remaining in the game Alabama field-goal kicker Jeremy Shelley remains perfect for the season and nails a 32-yarder to dash Notre Dame's hopes of winning their first national championship in over 20 years.

Alabama: 17 Notre Dame: 14