

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Burn, baby, burn

Offense's change of pace slows down Pittsburgh

By DOUGLAS FARMER
Sports Editor

Nearly half of Notre Dame's field goals came from behind the 3-point arc Monday night. Nonetheless, the No. 14 Irish toppled second-ranked Pittsburgh 56-51. Why the low scores despite the hot shooting? One word: Burn.

Irish coach Mike Brey first instituted the burn offense late last season. Since then, whenever Notre Dame (17-4, 6-3 Big East) breaks out the burn, it tests the patience of the players, its opponent and its fans.

"It is a drastic style of play," Brey said Tuesday afternoon. "Everybody gets less shots, everybody touches the ball less. The mental concentration and sacrifice of reps on the offensive end I think is underrated and it tells you how this group really believes."

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Fourth-year forward Tim Abromaitis holds the ball during Notre Dame's 80-75 victory over Marquette Saturday. Abromaitis and the Irish routinely let the shot clock dwindle in their burn offense.

SARAH O'CONNOR/The Observer

SMC BASKETBALL

Belles look to rise in standings

By LAURA COLETTI
Sports Writer

Saint Mary's continues its second round of MIAA Conference play when it faces Olivet tonight at 7:30.

The Belles (12-6, 5-4) are looking to rebound from a 74-60 road loss to Calvin over the weekend. They defeated Olivet (6-11, 5-4) once already during the 2010-11 season, a 72-67 victory away from home. The winner of tonight's game will move into sole possession of fourth place in conference standings, behind only Calvin (9-0), Hope (8-1), and Albion (6-2).

Belles Coach Jenn Henley said she liked parts of what she saw in her team against Calvin, even if the outcome was a loss.

"We got good looks in our offense against Calvin in the first half," Henley said. "Our shots just

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FENCING

Unexpected lessons from grade school lead to college passion

By MICHAEL TODISCO
Sports Writer

Elementary school gymnasiums are often filled with dull activities; square dancing, gymnastics and dodge ball are among the pastimes dreaded by young students. For freshman fencer Ariel DeSmet, however, his elementary school gymnasium was where his future passion would be identified.

"A local fencing coach came to

my grade school back in 1999 and offered a few classes," DeSmet said. "When he saw that I did well he offered to give me free lessons and free stuff, and from there I really got into it."

While DeSmet did not fence for his school, he refined his skills at the Northwest Fencing Center in Beaverton, Ore. Under the tutelage of top coaches, DeSmet excelled on the junior circuit, competing for the United States team at world competi-

tions on four occasions.

Many of these tournaments were hosted in different countries, an aspect of the sport that DeSmet truly enjoys.

"Fencing is a pretty unique sport in that it allows you to travel all over the world; Europe, China, Japan," DeSmet said. "Turkey was my favorite. I got to spend three weeks right on the Mediterranean coast."

When it came time to choose a school, DeSmet's decision was easy. Notre Dame's combination

of competitive dominance and top coaching was too good to pass up.

"Notre Dame [is] the powerhouse of my weapon, the foil," DeSmet said. "The coach here [Gia Kvaratskhelia], is one of the best, nicest, and most amazing coaches in the country. Also, because everyone on the team fenced at such a high level before coming here, I'm familiar with so many of them. It's fun to be teammates with former rivals who I have known for

years."

Notre Dame's prominence in the foil has provided DeSmet with many mentors and role models on the team.

"Our team captain (senior) Zach Schirtz has been really helpful, and the upperclassmen have helped me manage balancing fencing and travel with school," DeSmet said.

DeSmet is also learning to balance fencing for Notre Dame

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MEN'S SWIMMING & DIVING

Dyer leads ND in four events

By JOSEPH MONARDO
Sports Writer

As a freshman, swimmer Frank Dyer is making an impact both in the lanes and in the locker room. The freestyle specialist holds the top times for the Notre Dame team in four events this year, and has become a key member of a strong Irish squad.

When Notre Dame (5-3) hosts the Shamrock Invitational this weekend, Dyer will be one of the swimmers to watch. Having swum the 50-, 100-, 200-, 500- and 1,000-yard freestyles this year, Dyer can claim the team's best time for the events in all but the 50-yard

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Freshman freestyler Frank Dyer heads toward the wall during the Dennis Stark Relays at Notre Dame Oct. 8.

COLEMAN COLLINS/The Observer

WOMEN'S TRACK AND FIELD

Miler rises to second in NCAA with 4:42.14

By ANDREW GASTELUM
Sports Writer

As a little girl growing up in the suburbs of Chicago, Rebecca Tracy would keep a jar filled with little pieces of paper, detailing her latest aspiration. Unraveled, they spelled out dreams like soccer player, interior designer and paleontologist, among many more.

At that young age, nowhere in the jar did she scribble college runner, let alone second fastest miler in the NCAA. Ten years later, the sophomore distance runner finds herself surprising everyone who sees her

run, as well as herself.

"[I'm] thrilled," Tracy said about her personal record mile time this past Saturday. "Every time that I [set a personal record] I am utterly surprised. Coach tells me to just run to win the race and the times come. So I just ran."

By just running, Tracy posted the second fastest mile time in the NCAA with a 4:42.14 at the Notre Dame Invitational. Not only did she set a personal best, but Tracy also beat out Michigan State senior and NCAA finals veteran Emily MacLeod by a mere 0.61

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Burn

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Prior to the road upset, every time Notre Dame scored less than 60 points in a game, it stumbled to that low total thanks to abysmal shooting.

The Irish shot a disappointing 18.8 percent from 3-point range in a 22-point trouncing to Marquette, 20 percent from deep in a loss to St. John's, and a 7.7 percent performance from deep in the second half against Kentucky.

At Pittsburgh, the Irish shot 9-of-18 from behind the arc and took just 39 total shots. The vast majority of those shots came with only seconds left on the shot clock — neither team scored a single fast-break point.

"We knew going in that we wanted to work [the shot clock] down," senior guard Scott Martin said. "We were just happy to be hitting those shots when we had those opportunities."

Martin opened Notre Dame's scoring with two 3-pointers in the opening minutes. In the second half, senior forward Carleton Scott hit multiple 3s, ending the night five-of-six from deep. Even when the Irish took their first lead since leading 8-5, it was on a 3-pointer courtesy of senior guard Ben Hansbrough, giving Notre Dame a 42-41 lead.

"I just felt like I was in the zone last night," Scott said. "[Martin] started out in the zone, and I guess he passed it on, and I passed it on to Ben. That's the great thing about our team, anybody can start feeling it at any moment."

In the burn offense, Notre Dame works the shot clock down to 10 seconds before

looking to attack the hoop, on every possession, to the extent that on some possessions Notre Dame endures a shot clock violation, and thus a turnover, rather than give the ball back to its opponent quickly.

"We are still just as aggressive as we normally are, it just takes us longer to get to it," Martin said. "We don't stop looking to score, we just wait for it, wait for it, let the clock burn down a little bit, then we have our aggressive mindset the rest of the shot clock."

Thus, the Irish force their opponent to play defense for 30 seconds at a time, rather than the usual 15 to 20.

"I felt it was definitely frustrating a little bit," Martin said. "When you have to play defense for 30 seconds every time down the floor, it gets old. I could tell they were getting a little frustrated."

As Pittsburgh's frustration grew Monday night, its deep bench stewed, not having an opportunity to create a difference in the game. Notre Dame avoided foul trouble, and its starters controlled the pace throughout the slow-paced, close match. This storm resulted in a Notre Dame upset that Brey said may be the biggest of his career.

Now, the Irish head into a nine-day break before heading to DePaul on Feb. 3 for the second half of its Big East season. With the break, the NCAA tournament will be on Notre Dame's mind, an invitation to which could come as a result of the burn, just as it did last season.

"If it wouldn't be for [the burn], we wouldn't have gotten a bid last year," Brey said. "So you have a great selling point."

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Scott Martin
senior guard

Belles

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weren't falling."

Henley said she feels confident in her squad entering tonight's game.

"Last time we played Olivet, we did a good job forcing them into turnovers," Henley said. "Unfortunately, we had turnovers as well, which kept it a close game. As we prepare to play them tomorrow, we need to cut down our turnovers. We need to do a better job of defending the drive against Olivet and limit the number of points they get in the paint."

Junior forward Kelley Murphy led a balanced attack for the Belles with 24 points the last time they faced Olivet. Three other players reached double-figures in

scoring during the contest, and the four together combined for all but nine of Saint Mary's points.

"We have a pretty balanced attack on offense, so I can't really pick out one person in particular [to lead us offensively]," Henley said. "We as a team need to step up our defense if we want to be successful. Tomorrow is all about

defense. It has really been a focus of ours all season long."

Henley expects the game to be close, and knows what her team has to do in order to achieve the outcome they are looking for.

"Olivet always plays us tough," she said. "They do a nice job of attacking the paint in their offense. We really need to focus on that and keep them off the foul line."

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Jenn Henley
Belles coach

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