

BLUE GOLD REPORT

SEPT. 26, 2018 ♦ NOTRE DAME VS. STANFORD

Game Info

Date: Sept. 29, 2018.

Site: Notre Dame Stadium (77,622).

Kickoff: 7:30 p.m. ET.

Television: NBC.

Radio: This broadcast can be heard live on SIRIUS Satellite Radio (channel 129) and on Notre Dame's IMG affiliates.

Series Facts: This will be the 33rd meeting between the two programs, with Notre Dame leading the series 19-13. Stanford has won three in a row, and seven of the last nine.

Head Coaches: Stanford — David Shaw (77-22, eighth season); Notre Dame — Brian Kelly (73-34, ninth season).

Noting Stanford: Shaw's 77 career wins are the most in school history ... Stanford is 27-7 (.794) under Shaw when ranked in the top 10 ... The Cardinal won nine games in 2017, which was just the second time in seven seasons the program didn't reach double-digit victories under Shaw ... Stanford is 25-14 (.641) against ranked opponents since 2011, the fifth-best clip nationally ... Those 25 wins against ranked opponents is the third-best total nationally during that same stretch, trailing only Alabama (39) and LSU (26) ... Stanford's 89 wins this decade rank fourth nationally and are the most of any private school, ahead of TCU (77), USC (75) and Notre Dame (73).

Brian Kelly Previews Stanford

Corey Bodden • BlueAndGold.com

Over the past decade, Notre Dame has not had much luck in conquering the Stanford Cardinal.

The Cardinal is 7-3 against the Fighting Irish in its last 10 meetings, and has won each of the last three. Notre Dame is ready to get back over the hump this Saturday in the top-10 matchup.

"There comes a point where if you've looked back on the three games, we had a lot to do with why we didn't win the last two games," Irish head coach Brian Kelly said on Tuesday. "There were 12 minutes to go in the fourth quarter, and we were leading last year. We went into the second half with a 10-0 lead the year before, and as you know, in both instances, we turned the football over.

"This is much more about us taking care of the football and playing it for four quarters. We have a great deal of respect for Stanford and how they run their program, but we need to play for four quarters and play good football.

"You can talk about not winning the last three games, but what we need to do is play better for four quarters."

Even with how the rivalry has played out recently, Kelly noted this year features two different teams and presents its own challenges.

Running back Bryce Love received much of the attention at his position heading into the 2018 season and for good reason after he rushed for 2,118 yards and 19 touchdowns a year ago. It's been a little bit of a struggle this year with just 254 yards and two scores on 59 carries in three games played.

"[He is] the best back in the country," Kelly said of Love. "Once you think he's down, he's gone. You've got to get him on the ground and tackle him ... I think he's going to get his yards. He's just too good of a player.

"I think you're really focusing on making sure that you're not short at the point of attack. You can't put him in a situation where he can go the distance."

While teams have focused on containing Love, junior quarterback K.J. Costello has taken advantage. The signal-caller has completed 64.0 percent of his passes for 1,056 yards with 10 touchdowns and three interceptions.

Senior wide receiver JJ Arcega-Whiteside has caught seven of Costello's 10 touchdown tosses as part of his 17 receptions for 408 yards in 2018. Junior tight end Kaden Smith is first on the team in catches, with 18 for 258 yards.

"K.J. Costello has really come into his own this year, distributing the football," Kelly said. "He's got a number of weapons. I think we all know JJ Arcega-Whiteside has been a go-to guy, but now obviously a number of the tight ends are outstanding, big-body types that he can get the football to. We saw that late in the game against Oregon with Colby Parkinson, Kaden Smith. You could go on and on.

"Costello's ability to stay in the pocket, get the football out, throw for a high percentage. Looks like he's really in control of that offense."

Through four games, Stanford is tied for 10th nationally in scoring defense, allowing just 13.5 points per game. The group is tied for 55th in yards allowed per game (356.8). In a win over Oregon last week, the Cardinal allowed more points (31) than the first three weeks combined (23).

"On the defensive side of the ball, they continue to employ a very aggressive, multi-dimensional defensive unit," Kelly began. "Lance Anderson has been there for a very long time since I've been here, and you know what you're going to get — a very physical, tough group, tough-minded.

"Defensive lineman Jovan Swann right here from the state of Indiana plays with a great motor, especially the last couple of games we've seen him, and then against us last year, he was all over the field.

"Linebackers are veteran players, Bobby Okereke, it seems like he's been around forever. Joey Alfieri is just a guy who turned the game around against

Oregon with the scoop and score. Very talented, a lot of moving parts there, Casey Toohill, really been impressed with the depth and kind of play-making ability at the linebacker position.”

The defensive backfield features a player very familiar with Notre Dame: former Irish commit Paulson Adebo.

“And then in the back end, veteran players back there,” Kelly said. “Paulson Adebo is playing really well at the cornerback position. We know about Alijah Holder. He’s been around for a few years; Ben Edwards, Frank Buncom are guys who we’ve recruited here.

“Very talented group across the board at all three levels on the defensive side of the ball.”

It goes without saying Saturday is crucial for both programs. A win by either team puts them one step closer to a potential College Football Playoff berth by adding a top-10 win to its résumé.

But for Notre Dame, the Irish are trying to reacquire the Legends Trophy, which has sat in Palo Alto, Calif., for three-plus years.

“We haven’t had it here in our lobby since the end of the 2014 season, so something that is very important to us,” Kelly said. “... But more importantly, it is a game where we need to play at our very best here against a top-ranked team in Stanford.”

David Shaw Preparing Stanford For ‘Difficult Place To Win’ At Notre Dame

Corey Bodden • BlueAndGold.com

Stanford head coach David Shaw is quite familiar with the Notre Dame program.

So playing in South Bend this weekend and potentially winning inside Notre Dame Stadium will be nothing new for the Cardinal head coach.

In his first seven years at the helm, Shaw compiled a 5-2 mark against the Irish (1-2 on the road). When he served as the offensive coordinator the previous four years under Jim Harbaugh, Stanford was 2-2 in the rivalry (with a 1-1 mark in South Bend).

Shaw knows communicating and handling the noise will be tough tasks on Saturday.

“It’s a difficult place to win,” he said on Tuesday. “Over the years it’s gotten

louder. ... They’ve done a great job in creating and making adjustments to the stadium, creating a great home-field advantage.

“You have to prepare for noise, the crowd being into it and loud on third downs and in the red zone. It’s a difficult place to come back with a victory.”

Beating Notre Dame and claiming the Legends Trophy remains meaningful for the players within the Stanford program.

“You talk to our players, which is where rivalry really matters, it’s right up there,” Shaw stated. “We feel we have a ton of rivals when you talk about Cal, USC, Oregon and Washington. Notre Dame is right up there as is UCLA. ... We recruit so nationally, so we don’t have all West Coast guys ... [a lot of them] either grow up watching Notre Dame or not liking them.

“The games have been outstanding over the years. A lot of victories on both sides and great players. There is no wonder why this game every year is one of the higher-rated games to watch.”

Over the past six meetings, five have finished with seven points or less. Stanford won 38-20 in 2017, but the Irish actually led 20-17 heading into the fourth quarter before the Cardinal capitalized on Notre Dame’s mistakes.

“That it didn’t start too well,” Shaw said of his memories from last year’s matchup. “They had some big plays, including a big shallow cross for a touchdown to Osiris’s brother [Equanimeous St. Brown]. The runner that I’m glad is gone now [Josh Adams] had a big one back against us. They still have great talent and great athletic ability.

“For what we just gave up this past week in the first half, we have to handle guys coming after us. They can move the ball. I still anticipate seeing both quarterbacks. They have an explosive offense we have to try and contain. That was a big thing last year keeping them under wraps and creating turnovers.”

After senior Brandon Wimbush started the first four games at quarterback, the Irish threw out junior Ian Book against Wake Forest. Book connected on 25 of 34 throws for 325 yards with two touchdowns while leading the Irish to a 56-27 victory over the Demon Deacons. Shaw still expects to see both signal-callers, even if Book gets the starting nod for a second straight week.

“I just zipped through the opposing team’s offense earlier in the week, but off of watching more than half pretty quickly, the kid has an accurate arm and quick release,” Shaw said of Book. “He’s a good athlete. ... That’s an added thing you have to deal with when a guy has an ability to beat you from inside and outside the pocket.”

With its 38-31 comeback win over Oregon and its three-game winning streak over the Irish, confidence from Stanford won’t be lacking in the top-10 matchup.

Top 10 Vs. Top 10 Showdown At Notre Dame Stadium

Lou Somogyi • BlueAndGold.com

Since the end of the 1993 college football season, different droughts can be pointed to in the ebb of the Notre Dame football operation during that time.

The most popular to use is the lack of a consensus national title in the past 29 years, easily eclipsing the previous high of 16 seasons from 1950-65 — although even the 1964 unit won a share of the title with Alabama and Arkansas.

Then there is the 24-year (and counting) streak of not even winning a major bowl (now known as Big Six) while at least three dozen other schools in that span have. In the 25 previous years from 1969-93, or when the Fighting Irish returned to the bowl scene in '69, they had won 10 — the most in the country over that quarter-century run.

A third element hit home this week: The showdown this Saturday night between No. 7 Stanford and No. 8 Notre Dame will mark the first time since Oct. 15, 2005 that two top-10 teams will meet in Notre Dame Stadium.

The battle 13 years ago was No. 1 USC's dramatic last-second 34-31 victory versus the No. 9 Fighting Irish in head coach Charlie Weis' debut season.

What stings even more is that Notre Dame has not won one of these top 10 vs. top 10 matchups on its home field since another epic event, the 31-24 win versus No. 1 Florida State on Nov. 13, 1993 that temporarily put the No. 2 Irish at the top spot.

Now, Notre Dame did defeat No. 8 Michigan at home in 2004 (28-20) — but that was when the Irish were unranked after finishing 5-7 the year prior and then opening 2004 with a 20-17 upset loss at BYU.

Since 1993, Notre Dame actually won two top 10 vs. top 10 matchups, but both were in the opponent's stadium.

The first was in head coach Lou Holtz's final season in 1996, when No. 9 Notre Dame got a 39-yard field goal by freshman Jim Sanson as time expired to notch a 27-24 win at No. 6 Texas.

Alas, the No. 5 Irish lost at home the following week to No. 4 Ohio State, 29-16.

The second such win occurred Oct. 27, 2012, when third-year head coach Brian Kelly's No. 5 Irish defeated No. 8 Oklahoma (30-13) in Norman.

However, in the 24 seasons from 1994-2017, Notre Dame is 2-12 overall (including bowl games) in top 10 vs. top 10 tilts, with the most recent such contest the 41-8 loss last Nov. 11 at Miami when the Irish were No. 3 and the Hurricanes No. 7.

To put into context how long that 13-year drought in Notre Dame Stadium has been with a top 10 vs. top 10 matchup, consider that under Holtz from November 1987 (when No. 7 Notre Dame defeated No. 10 Alabama, 37-6) to the aforementioned Ohio State loss in 1996, the Irish had 11 such games on its home field, posting an 8-0-1 ledger from 1987-93.

Since the start of the Associated Press poll in 1936, Notre Dame is 22-11-1 in top 10 vs. top 10 contests at home.

Holtz led the way at 8-2-1, while Frank Leahy was 7-1 from 1942-43 and then 1947-53, and Ara Parseghian 5-3 from 1965-73.

In his six seasons (1975-80), Dan Devine had only one such home game, a 42-23 loss to USC in 1979. (The famous 1977 Green Jersey Game that helped propel the national title had USC No. 5 while the Irish were No. 11.)

This will be Kelly's debut at home in such a contest, and he also has an eight-game winning streak going at home, the longest since the 10 in a row that extended from the last two home contests in 2011 through the first two in 2013.

"We thrive on our home field," Kelly said. "We've had a good run going at home. To have a home game against a top-10 opponent when you're a top-10 team, these are the moments that you wait for, and we're certain that I think we're going to be met with a great crowd."

It's time!

The screenshot shows the BlueAndGold.com website. At the top is a dark blue header with the "BLUE AND GOLD" logo. Below the header is a large image of a Notre Dame football game in progress. Overlaid on the bottom left of the game image is a text box that reads "24m Bryan Driskell Inside Look: Notre Dame Offensive Line/Run Game vs. Wake Forest". To the right of the game image are three smaller thumbnail images for podcasts: "Stanford The New Top Nemesis On Notre Dame Schedule: Part One", "The Other Side: Podcast: Talking Stanford With Jay Rayburn", and "David Shaw Preparing Stanford For 'Difficult' Place To Win At Notre Dame". Below these thumbnails is a blue banner for "FutureCast rivals" with the text "Forecast where your favorite". At the bottom of the page is a "TICKER" section with a small image and text, and a "JOIN THE DISCUSSION" button. A large yellow starburst graphic in the bottom right corner contains the text "Start Your FREE 30-DAY TRIAL Today! Use Code: BGI30".