Game Info

Date: Dec. 29, 2018

Site: AT&T Stadium (80,000)

Kickoff: 4 p.m. ET

Television: ESPN

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

Series Facts: The Tigers lead the all-time series 2-1. The two programs have met just once since 1980, with Clemson claiming a 24-22 home victory over Notre Dame in 2015.

Head Coaches: Clemson — Dabo Swinney (114-30, 10th season); Notre Dame — Brian Kelly (80-34, ninth season).

Noting Clemson: The Tigers completed the seventh undefeated regular season in program history ... Under Swinney, Clemson has won at least 10 games in eight straight seasons, which is the second-longest active such streak in the nation (Alabama, 11) ... The 42-10 victory over Pittsburgh in the ACC title game was CU's 100th of the decade, making the Tigers one of three Football Bowl Subdivision programs with 100 wins in the 2010s ... Clemson is the first team in ACC history to win four consecutive league titles outright ... The Tigers are seeking to advance to the national championship game for the third time in four years (they played Alabama in both 2015 and 2016).

Notre Dame And Clemson Downplay, Adapt To Dexter Lawrence's Absence

Lou Somogyi • BlueAndGold.com

Of all the matchups in this Saturday's College Football Playoff showdown between 13-0 Clemson and 12-0 Notre Dame, maybe the most intriguing is the Tigers' mini-NFL franchise defensive line versus the Fighting Irish offensive line that was in a relative state of flux much of the 2018 campaign.

It became an even bigger storyline this week, too, when Clemson's 6-4, 350-pound nose tackle **Dexter Lawrence** — a projected first-round pick whom ESPN recently ranked No. 10 among its top 50 players in college football this year — was suspended after an NCAA-administered drug test found a trace of ostarine, a banned substance, in his system. (Two other reserves, tight end **Braden Galloway** and offensive lineman **Zach Giella**, have also been suspended).

There is a chance Lawrence's eligibility could be saved against Notre Dame if his "B-sample" comes back clean, but the Clemson staff has not given any practice reps to Lawrence this week.

For Notre Dame fifth-year senior center and team captain **Sam Mustipher**, who would have been the one going up against Lawrence, his mindset remains unfazed.

"I'll believe it when he doesn't show up on Saturday," Mustipher said. "I've learned a long time ago you have to prepare to play the best — no matter whether he plays or not."

The mantra for the Notre Dame offensive line — and overall team in general — has remained consistent: It's not about who you play, which is not under your control. What you can control is maintaining the right attitude toward any competition and executing the basic principles that have been taught throughout one's career. Plus, players study on film more than just who is the starter in order to help them adjust to different personnel.

"If we play to what we're capable of, I think we'll be fine," Mustipher said. "When a guy goes out, it's not changing our fundamental things. … Here's what he does differently than the guy in front of him. He escapes blocks differently. It's just learning those things. A lot of the backups we've already studied, so we know what they're going to do when they come in.

"… That roster is so deep in talent I'm not concerned we're not going to get a good challenge up front. I know we will, and we're looking forward to that."

In addition to Lawrence ranking No. 10 overall on the aforementioned ESPN list, fellow interior defensive tackle **Christian Wilkins** was No. 5, and defensive end **Clelin Ferrell** was at No. 12. (Clemson running back **Travis Etienne** is No. 14. Notre Dame has four players on this list, led by junior cornerback **Julian Love** at No. 21, but no one from the offensive line.)

Replacements for Lawrence inside would include 6-4, 315-pound senior **Albert Huggins** (63 career tackles, 13 for loss and 7.5 sacks); 6-1, 300-pound redshirt sophomore **Nyles Pinckney** (38 career tackles, five for loss and a sack); and 6-4, 310-pound redshirt freshman **Jordan Williams** (15 tackles this season, 2.5 for loss, with 1.5 sacks).

Per Pro Football Focus, Williams took 465 snaps this year, which amounts to about 36 per game, while Huggins had 306, with 15 quarterback hurries and 15 run stops. However, most have that occurred in mop-up roles, which Clemson has had plenty of this year. In the last eight games, the average margin of victory for the Tigers was 38.3 points. Still, the domino effect cannot be underestimated when suddenly a backup is thrust into a role with more snaps.

The presence of a dominant defensive front has enabled esteemed Clemson coordinator **Brent Venables** to not have to blitz as much while trusting the front to control the line of scrimmage. The Tigers rank third nationally against the run (93.0 yards per game) and are tied for the second-fewest points allowed (13.7 per game). Venables is taking the classic next-man-in approach that is part of Coaching 101.

"It's like an injury, and I've spent zero time, 'Oh, is he going to play, what's the chance?' I don't know," said Venables, while also admitting he's heartbroken for Lawrence. "Being real honest, but I haven't spent a lot of time thinking about it. I've got a lot of confidence in Albert and Nyles. They've played a lot of winning football — not just this year. Last year when Dexter was probably 50 percent of what he is now as a player, they both played a lot of really good football.

"So injuries are a part of the game, and that's what we're treating it like. I have nothing to do with the process, so I have spent no time really thinking about it."

Huggins and Pinckney have been in the rotation much like a **Kurt Hinish** (323 snaps to **Jonathan Bonner's** 392 at nose tackle) for Notre Dame, or liberal usage of reserve ends such as **Daelin Hayes** (431 snaps) or **Ade Ogundeji** (237 snaps).

"So now we'll play all two of them, plus Jordan Williams," Venables said. "Jordan has gotten

back healthy the last part of the season and he's going to be a good player. So he's repping in, too."

Wilkins said he was stunned and actually thought it was almost comical that Lawrence is in his current pickle.

"I don't know how that could happen," Wilkins said. "He's clearly not taking anything — he doesn't need to take anything. [The positive test] could just come from anywhere. It's unfortunate. I just know the guy taking his place will be more than prepared, and it's a special opportunity on the biggest stage to perform and be able to help out the team. … I'm pretty sure they won't let this opportunity pass to be successful and help the team as much as they can."

Oftentimes, the absence of a premier player can have a galvanizing effect on a unit to prove that group's excellence is not about just one individual.

"They're not nervous or afraid of this opportunity," Ferrell said. "They're battle tested. Both of them have played starter reps before, especially Albert. I consider Albert a starter regardless of what game you play. So we really just look at it as no big changeup …

"You can't really replace a Dexter as far as what he brings, but Albert brings a skill set that's unique as well. … He has a natural just kind of bulldozer strength to him, and he has quickness to match it. Albert is an intelligent person as well, too. Game plans come to him easy."

Meanwhile, Wilkins knows that even though the Clemson defensive line gets most of the publicity, the Notre Dame offensive line merits its own praise. Wilkins was a freshman in the Tigers' 24-22 win over the Irish in 2015, and he said that was one of the best lines he ever encountered.

"When I think of Notre Dame I always think of a very good offensive line," Wilkins said. "That's no different now … it shows when you watch the tape, because they're just really talented, they work well collectively as a unit, they don't beat themselves, and they don't make a lot of mistakes."

The admiration increased even more with the knowledge that the Irish graduated two top-nine NFL picks along the line, guard **Quenton Nelson** and tackle **Mike McGlinchey**, plus lost their best player, left guard **Alex Bars**, to a torn ACL, in game five.

"It's a testament to the guys on the team and their coaching staff just to be as productive and dominant as they've been," Wilkins said.

It serves as a lesson to Clemson — in addition to the Fighting Irish — that strong team play and a winning culture can trump individual setbacks.

On Paper Part II: Notre Dame Stacks Up Well Vs. Clemson

Bryan Driskell • BlueAndGold.com

Notre Dame was a double-digit underdog when the Cotton Bowl matchup against Clemson was first announced, and that line has only grown since then. The Tigers have both one of the nation's top offenses and defenses, and the simple analysis seems to be that the Fighting Irish don't have the firepower on either side of the ball to really compete.

We'll find out Dec. 29 if that is true or not, but on paper the matchup doesn't appear to be as slanted in Clemson's favor as much as the oddsmakers believe. That was true of the offense versus defense "On Paper" that we produced after the matchup was first announced. It's also true of the offense versus offense and defense versus defense matchups when you evaluate how the two teams performed against the best opponents on their schedules.

For this breakdown, I took the top 60 offenses and defenses on each team's schedule according to the S&P+. The averages provided in the article reflect how each team performed against those opponents.

NOTRE DAME DEFENSE VS. CLEMSON DEFENSE

Much of the talk in this game surrounds the Clemson defense and how dominant it has been this season. That perception of the Tiger defense is accurate. Clemson will put arguably the nation's most dominant defense on the field Dec. 29, but any look at the numbers shows that Notre Dame will also put an elite defense on the field.

The S&P Rank is how the S&P+ database ranks each offense that Clemson and Notre Dame faced this season. Using scoring offense and scoring defense ranks are one way to compare teams, but I've always preferred efficiency ranks due to the fact it does a better job of putting a performance into context.

The S&P+ rating is based around efficiency, explosiveness, field position, finishing drives and turnovers. It also takes into account garbage time stats and removes numbers accumulated when a game is considered no longer competitive.

Clemson faced seven offenses that ranked in the top 60, while Notre Dame faced eight such offenses. Both teams played five opponents that finished inside the top 50. I included the top 60 in order to make the numbers closer in an attempt to remove any discussion of skewing the numbers in Notre Dame's favor, because a look at just the top-50 offenses gives the Irish a significant advantage.

The numbers against top-60 offenses are almost identical. Clemson's defense held opponents to just 0.5 less points and 21.3 less yards per game, while the yards per play averages were the same.

Here are the numbers against top-50 offenses:

Clemson — 22.4 points per game, 382.4 yards per game, 5.6 yards per play

Notre Dame — 15.4 points per game, 326.2 yards per game, 4.7 yards per play

So when the competition has been the very best, Notre Dame has outperformed Clemson's vaunted defense. Clemson allowed four of the top five top-50 offenses it faced to score at least 21 points, with a high of 35 points against South Carolina. Twice it allowed opponents to rack up at least 501 yards.

Notre Dame allowed just one of its five best opponents to score at least 21 points. The most yards it allowed were 441 against Virginia Tech.

NOTRE DAME OFFENSE VS. CLEMSON OFFENSE

Even the most critical analysis of Notre Dame will give the Irish defense credit for being a really productive unit. The Irish offense — from an overall numbers standpoint — doesn't come nearly as close to the Clemson offense.

A look at how the offenses compared against the best defenses on the schedule showed that while Clemson still has the advantage, it's not nearly great as it appears when looking at just the raw data.

Both teams played six defenses that finished ranked in the top 60 in efficiency, and all six were Power Five opponents.

Clemson holds a 3.7 points per game advantage, but its yards per game advantage is just 2.2 more and its yards per play average is only 0.1 better than the Notre Dame offense.

There were two common opponents in this ranking, with Clemson blowing out Florida State 59-10 and the Irish beat the Seminoles just 42-13. Clemson squeaked by Syracuse 27-23, while Notre Dame walloped the Orange 36-3. Clemson averaged 43.0 points and 496.5 yards per game against those two common opponents, which was greater than Notre Dame's 39.0 points and 479.0 yards per game.

Notre Dame had an advantage in yards per play, going for 6.4 in those two contests, while Clemson posted a 6.2 clip.

Notre Dame's "worst" performance against its top-60 opponents came against Michigan, which S&P+ ranked as the No. 5 defense in the nation. Clemson's highest-ranked defense faced was Boston College at No. 28.

Here are the numbers against opponents that ranked between No. 28 and No. 60 in efficiency:

Clemson — 36.2 points per game, 460.0 yards per game, 6.2 yards per play
Notre Dame — 34.2 points per game, 489.0 yards per game, 6.4 yards per play

Clemson made a quarterback change early in the season, replacing senior quarterback **Kelly Bryant** with freshman **Trevor Lawrence**, who has been brilliant. The Texas A&M game was the third-lowest points total for the Tigers, while the first start for Lawrence — against Syracuse — tied for the lowest point total.

Interestingly, Clemson averaged 7.0 yards per play against Texas A&M, which was its high-

est total against top-60 defenses. The game against Syracuse (5.7) was the lowest yards per play output in this breakdown.

Notre Dame's worst performance came in a game in which quarterback **Ian Book** didn't throw a pass and leading rusher **Dexter Williams** didn't have a single touch due to a four-game suspension.

Pro Football Focus: Clemson's Defensive Players

Corey Bodden • BlueAndGold.com

Notre Dame is set to face the No. 2 Clemson Tigers in the Cotton Bowl Dec. 29 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

The No. 3 Fighting Irish will have quite the challenge in slowing down the undefeated ACC champions coached by **Dabo Swinney**.

Heading into the matchup, *Blue & Gold Illustrated* will have plenty of articles breaking down the contest and how the two teams match up.

In the second of two articles, BGI takes a look at how the Clemson defensive starters and key rotation players have graded out this year, according to Pro Football Focus. A snapshot of the Irish on the respective side of the ball will be provided as well to showcase the grades between the Clemson offense and Notre Dame defense, and vice versa.

To begin, let's take a look at how the Clemson defense stacks up against the Notre Dame offense. You can check out more about the Tigers offensively HERE.

Note: Grades highlighted in light blue indicate an elite grade from PFF.

Overall, Clemson's defense has graded out at 95.4, which is tied for third nationally behind Alabama and Washington, and even with Miami (Fla.).

The unit does boast the top run defense grade at 97.5 and pass rush mark of 91.0, while ranking 52nd in coverage at 89.5.

To counter, Notre Dame has the 41st-highest offensive grade at 78.6. The Irish sit 59th in the pass game at 72.3 and 79th on the ground at 72.7. Right tackle **Robert Hainsey** (73.6) is the lone current regular starter up front with a grade above 70. Left guard **Aaron Banks** is close at 69.3. Notre Dame's offensive line will have their hands full with four Clemson defensive linemen possessing a grade of at least 84.7.

Quarterback **Ian Book** has graded out at 76.9 this season and will go against the Tigers secondary that is outside the top 50 in the FBS. Running back **Dexter Williams** is the second-highest rated offensive player for the Irish at 77.7 and will be a key figure in trying to establish the ground game against a talented front.

Take a deeper look into the Tigers' individual offensive players, per the grading of PFF, below with starters and key rotational players included.

KEY

PFF Grade = The overall grade for offense or defense for that particular player. Other specific grades will be noted in each section.

PFF (Conference) Rank = Where the player ranks among their position for overall grade within the league.

Note: Conference rankings factor in number of snaps player with conference championship game performances not factored in; N/A = player did not meet threshold

* Starter

DE CLELIN FERRELL*
2018 Stats: 47 tackles, 17.5 for loss, 10.5 sacks
PFF Grade: 84.7
PFF ACC Position Rank: 6th

Ferrell has been a terror for opposing offensive linemen all year with a team-high 10.5 sacks. The defensive end posted his best overall mark of the year (89.8) in an early season road win over Texas A&M after going for three total tackles for loss and two sacks. Though he has just one grade over 80.0, he has 11 games with at least a 67.1 grade.

Ferrell has been consistent in both getting to the quarterback and defending the run. He's been a tad better on the pass rush (83.1) while recording an 81.0 grade against the run. However, he is just one of multiple edge players teams have to worry about.

DE AUSTIN BRYANT*
2018 Stats: 36 tackles, 11.5 for loss, 6.5 sacks
PFF Grade: 68.0
PFF ACC Position Rank: 30th

Though he has the lowest overall grade of the four starting defensive linemen for the Tigers, Bryant is second on the team with 6.5 sacks. Bryant's efforts have given him a 65.0 grade per PFF in getting to the quarterback, while posting a better 70.0 mark in the run game.

Bryant's top performance came in a win over Georgia Southern (74.7) where he notched three total tackles and two sacks. His second-best mark came his last time out in the ACC title victory over Pittsburgh (72.9) with five tackles.

DE XAVIER THOMAS
2018 Stats: 28 tackles, 7.5 for loss, 3.0 sacks
PFF Grade: 88.3
PFF ACC Position Rank: 5th

The former five-star defensive end began the year strong with seven of his first eight games with at least a grade of 76.8, but his last five have been under 73.6 leading into the playoff.

With a pass rush grade of 87.4, Thomas has been strong against the run as well with a mark of 81.1 to go with a tackling grade of 73.0 so far this season. Even when Bryant and Ferrell come out of the game, the Tigers have talent such as Thomas to continue bringing the pressure.

DT CHRISTIAN WILKINS*
2018 Stats: 46 tackles, 12.5 for loss and 4.5 sacks
PFF Grade: 93.2
PFF ACC Position Rank: 1st

What makes the Clemson defense so good? Most will likely start with Wilkins up the middle. He ranks among the top five nationally for interior players and has recorded 4.5 sacks this season. He's posted three games this year with at least a 90.0 grade — Georgia Tech (92.1), Louisville (91.8) and Furman (91.7) — with stellar marks overall in pass rush (90.7) and run defense (93.5).

Irish center **Sam Mustipher**, Banks and guard **Tommy Kraemer** will be key in slowing down Wilkins from getting to Book up the middle and allowing him to step up into the pocket.

DT DEXTER LAWRENCE*
2018 Stats: 36 tackles, 7.0 for loss, 1.5 sacks
PFF Grade: 90.3
PFF ACC Position Rank: 3rd

Right next to Wilkins is another very talented interior player in Lawrence. He does not have the sack numbers of Wilkins, but he has been quite effective throughout the year as the anchor in the middle of the Tigers defense.

Lawrence has been better against the run (90.3) than the pass (81.5) and has been a reliable tackler (84.1) for the year. Lawrence's top grade came just a couple of weeks before the conclusion of the regular season in a victory over Duke (83.9). He will be tough to handle in the interior for the Irish if he's able to play.

DT NYLES PINCKNEY
2018 Stats: 21 tackles, 2.5 for loss
PFF Grade: 77.9
PFF ACC Position Rank: 12th

Like most major programs, Clemson utilizes a rotation along the defensive line and the interior is no different. Pinckney is not a menace like Lawrence or Wilkins, but he has put together a strong season which has led to his above-average grade from the service.

Pinckney has been much more effective in the run game this fall with an 80.0 grade and a top mark of 91.9 in a win over Georgia Southern. He's posted a grade of 68.0 in every game this year when it comes to rushing the passer for an average of 61.7.

DT ALBERT HUGGINS
2018 Stats: 16 tackles, 3.5 for loss and 2.5 sacks
PFF Grade: 73.9
PFF ACC Position Rank: 25th

Huggins has made the most of his chances this fall with the 2.5 sacks from his defensive tackle position. He has been solid in both rushing the passer (75.0) and defending the run (72.2).

LB TRE LAMAR*
2018 Stats: 68 tackles, 5.5 for loss, 3.0 sacks, one interception
PFF Grade: 86.1
PFF ACC Position Rank: 3rd

Lamar is third between the starting linebackers when it comes to total stops, but he has earned the highest grade so far entering the playoff. His best two grades came in back-to-back weeks when he recorded 10 tackles against Syracuse (86.1) and eight tackles and two sacks versus Wake Forest (85.7).

Lamar has been great against the run this year (91.8) while earning a pass rush grade of 72.7. Coverage has been a little shakier (58.8) for Lamar, so the Irish may look to exploit that and create favorable matchups against Lamar with running backs, tight ends or even slot receivers.

LB ISAIAH SIMMONS*
2018 Stats: 74 tackles, 7.5 for loss, 1.5 sacks
PFF Grade: 81.6
PFF ACC Position Rank: T-6th

The honor of being the leading tackler for the Tigers goes to Simmons, who also possesses the second-best PFF grade of the starters on the second level. Even with an 80.0-plus overall grade for the season, Simmons's top grade was a 76.9 against Georgia Southern (five tackles). Like Lamar, Simmons has been more consistent stopping the run (90.1) than rushing the passer (67.1).

Unlike Lamar, Simmons has been good in coverage (76.5) throughout the year.

LB KENDALL JOSEPH*
2018 Stats: 73 tackles, 5.5 for loss, 3.5 sacks
PFF Grade: 73.8
PFF ACC Position Rank: 21st

Joseph is right behind Simmons in tackles and has been able to get to the quarterback a few times as well. In a win over Florida State where he notched four tackles, Joseph recorded his top overall grade of 77.9. His next two best performances came in the following weeks against Boston College (76.6) and Louisville (75.5) where he combined for 17 tackles and 2.5 sacks.

Against the Irish, Joseph could be a target when the offense tries to exploit matchups in the pass game with a coverage grade of just 61.0 and a tackle mark of 64.3.

LB J.D. DAVIS
2018 Stats: 36 tackles, 5.0 for loss, 2.0 sacks
PFF Grade: 72.3
PFF ACC Position Rank: 24th

Davis will get a few chances for the Tigers when Joseph, Lamar or Simmons need a quick breather. He has been strong in stuffing the run with a 83.9 grade, but coverage (57.9) and tackling (45.9) have not been his strong points this season.

LB JALEN WILLIAMS
2018 Stats: 17 tackles, one interception

PFF Grade: 60.0
PFF ACC Position Rank: 43rd

The Irish may also see some of Williams on Dec. 29 as part of the linebacker rotation. Williams put together an average 60.0 grade for the season with a 72.0 mark in the run and 59.2 rushing the passer. His coverage has been less than stellar as well (51.8).

CB TRAYVON MULLEN*
2018 Stats: 25 tackles, 3.0 for loss, 1.0 sacks
PFF Grade: 75.9
PFF ACC Position Rank: 12th

At 6-foot-2, Mullen will be key in stopping the 6-foot-4 receivers (Boykin and Claypool) on the outside. The potential NFL Draft pick has the highest grade of the starting cornerbacks for the Tigers, thanks to 81.3 and 85.4 marks in run defense and tackling, respectively.

Mullen has a coverage grade of 73.2, but just one individual game (Duke) above 70.0 (77.3). South Carolina quarterback Jake Bentley threw for over 500 yards, while Texas A&M's Kellen Mond recorded over 400. The Clemson cornerbacks will be a major key in stopping the Irish from accumulating the same amount of yardage in Arlington.

CB A.J. TERRELL*
2018 Stats: 42 tackles, two interceptions
PFF Grade: 74.2
PFF ACC Position Rank: 22nd

Terrell will enter the playoff with some momentum after recording his best grade of the season against Pittsburgh (74.2) with four tackles and an interception to help keep the Panthers in check. Terrell has actually graded out better in coverage this year (74.6) than Mullen with his best grade also being against the Panthers (77.4).

Terrell has been strong in tackling (80.3) while posting a solid mark of 71.7 in stopping the run.

CB MARK FIELDS
2018 Stats: Seven tackles, three passes defended
PFF Grade: 63.0
PFF ACC Position Rank: 45th

Outside of Mullen and Terrell, the Tigers will utilize Fields on the outside as well with 289 snaps played in 11 contests this year.

There has been a drop between the starters and Fields with the overall grade of 63.0 and a 64.6 coverage mark. Fields has struggled tackling this season (30.8) and in stopping the run (52.7). A heavy dosage of Mullen and Terrell is expected if the Irish use two tight ends on the field, but Fields could see time if the team goes three-wide.

S TANNER MUSE*
2018 Stats: 53 tackles, 2.0 for loss and two interceptions
PFF Grade: 82.9
PFF ACC Position Rank: 2nd

Muse is the top-rated starting defensive back for the Tigers this season with a season-best grade of 88.2 in a win over Wake Forest where he recorded two tackles and one interception. The safety has been strong in run support (84.1) while holding his own in coverage at 75.9. Tackling has been okay for Muse at 69.5.

If the Irish decide to take a few deep shots to stretch the field, Muse will be one to watch when it comes to potentially making a play.

S K'VON WALLACE*
2018 Stats: 43 tackles, one interception
PFF Grade: 75.8
PFF ACC Position Rank: 18th

Wallace lines up next to Muse in the middle of the field and, like Muse, has been strong in defending the run (80.3) and in coverage (74.4). Wallace posted coverage grades of 89.0 and 81.8 in wins over Texas A&M and NC state, respectively, where he recorded nine combined tackles, one interception and one pass defended.

The safety also has six tackling grades in the 80s this year for a year-long mark of 73.5.

S DENZEL JOHNSON
2018 Stats: 24 tackles, 2.5 for loss
PFF Grade: 80.7
PFF ACC Position Rank: 8th

Though not a starter, Johnson has the second-highest grade of the safeties the Tigers use in their rotation. Johnson has been stellar in coverage this year with a season-long grade of 86.6 to go with a 65.0 run defense grade.

S NOLAN TURNER
2018 Stats: 27 tackles
PFF Grade: 65.8
PFF ACC Position Rank: 36th

Though he has three more tackles than Johnson, Turner has graded out over 15 points lower overall this season. Turner has struggled in coverage at times with an overall mark of 60.6, but has fared better in the run game at 74.6. His tackling grade of 43.3 has not helped his total grade from the service.

Turner and Johnson will need to be on their games when they get a chance to be on the field against the Irish offense.

Pro Football Focus: Clemson's Offensive Players

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The following is a look at how the Clemson offensive starters and key rotation players have graded out this year, according to Pro Football Focus. A snapshot of the Irish on the respective side of the ball will be provided as well to showcase the grades between the Clemson offense and Notre Dame defense and vice versa.

Note: Grades highlighted in light blue indicate an elite grade from PFF.

Overall, the group has graded out at 90.4 which ranks sixth in the country. On the flip side, the Tigers will face the sixth ranked defense in Notre Dame (94.3).

Upon first glance, one would likely notice the elite grade from PFF for Clemson starting quarterback **Trevor Lawrence**, who took over the starting job early in the season. Lawrence will face the 9th best coverage defense in the FBS with the Irish grading out at 92.9 in 12 regular season contests. Boston College at 18th nationally (91.7) was the top unit faced by the Tigers prior to the Irish .

Both cornerback **Julian Love** and safety **Alohi Gilman** have earned elite grades from the service. Love has 15 passes defended on the year, which is tied for 7th nationally, while Gilman has two interceptions.

Another major matchup between the Clemson offense and Notre Dame defense will be in the trenches.

The Irish have four regular defensive linemen — **Jerry Tillery, Julian Okwara**, **Khalid Kareem** and **Ade Ogundeji** — graded higher than the entire Clemson starting offensive line group that allowed just three sacks, per PFF. Notre Dame defensive linemen have combined for 23.5 sacks this year.

Notre Dame has also graded out as the 35th best team in stopping the run with a 92.8 grade, while Clemson is third nationally on the ground, earning a 92.0 mark through 13 contests.

Take a deeper looking into the Tigers individual offensive players, per the grading of PFF, below with starters and key rotational players included.

QB TREVOR LAWRENCE*
2018 Stats: 2,606 yards, 24 touchdowns, four interceptions

PFF Grade: 90.0
PFF ACC Position Rank: 2nd

The true freshman has performed well since taking over as the starter for the Tigers and posted two of his best three grades over the month of the season. PFF gave Lawrence a 93.0 mark against South Carolina after he threw for 393 yards and a score which bested his previous best of 83.2 in a victory over Duke (251 yards and two touchdowns).

Though he has a modest 58.5 grade in the run game, Lawrence has notched his best two grades of 72.7 and 69.2 in the last two contests versus rival South Carolina and in the ACC title game against Pittsburgh.

RB TRAVIS ETIENNE*
2018 Stats: 1,464 yards, 21 touchdowns
PFF Grade: 89.2
PFF ACC Position Rank: 1st

While Lawrence has played well, Etienne has taken pressure off the freshman with a stellar season for himself through 13 games. The sophomore will face Notre Dame coming off his second-best grade of 89.7 after rushing for 156 yards and two touchdowns on 12 carries in the ACC title win over Pittsburgh.

Etienne has been good in keeping Lawrence upright with a 71.7 pass block grade and 10 games with at least a 70.0 mark.

RB ADAM CHOICE
2018 Stats: 68 carries, 506 yards, seven touchdowns
PFF Grade: 78.6
PFF ACC Position Rank: 5th

Choice is another part of a talented backfield, averaging 7.44 yards per carry. Choice is starting to peak this season with two of his top three grades coming in Clemson's last two games against the Gamecocks (86.5) and the Panthers (74.9). In a 77-16 drubbing of Louisville on Nov. 3, Choice posted a top mark of 94.2, adding 43 yards on three carries to the team's efforts.

RB TAVIEN FEASTER
2018 Stats: 71 carries, 409 yards, six touchdowns
PFF Grade: 75.5
PFF ACC Position Rank: 6th

Feaster has the most carries of the running backs behind Etienne, but is not in the top three in rushing yards. In a win over South Carolina, Feaster rushed for 63 yards and a score on nine carries. His next two top grades came in wins over Georgia Tech (81.2) and Georgia Southern (78.0) earlier in the season.

Feaster hasn't fared well in the pass game with an overall mark of 49.2 and a blocking grade of 49.6.

RB LYN-J DIXON

2018 Stats: 56 carries, 536 yards, five touchdowns
PFF Grade: 83.8
PFF ACC Position Rank: N/A (not enough snaps)

Though he has not played the snaps of the three running backs above, Dixon has been explosive in his chances, averaging nearly 10 yards per carry. Much of Dixon's damage though came in wins over Wake Forest (91.0) and Louisville (81.8) when he combined for 279 yards and three scores on just 14 carries.

Dixon may not be on the field as much against the Irish, but Clark Lea's defense will need to be ready when he gets a chance.

WR TEE HIGGINS*
2018 Stats: 52 catches, 802 yards, 10 touchdowns
PFF Grade: 88.4
PFF ACC Position Rank: 1st

Higgins has been a tough matchup all season for opposing defenses, and the wide receiver will be challenged by the top-graded Power Five cornerback he's seen this year in Julian Love.

Higgins put together one of his best games of the year against South Carolina, reeling in six receptions for 142 yards and a score. For the season, Higgins is averaging 15.4 yards per catch and will be key for Love and company to shut down.

WR AMARI RODGERS*
2018 Stats: 46 catches, 514 yards, four touchdowns
PFF Grade: 67.5
PFF ACC Position Rank: 25th

Despite a lower grade, Rodgers ranks second on the team in catches and third in yards and touchdowns. That is due to some inconsistency — he had seven games with a mark under 60.0, per PFF. During a blowout victory over Florida State, Rodgers recorded his best game of the year (84.4), catching six passes for 156 yards and two touchdowns.

Rodgers will likely see a healthy dose of Pride Jr. if the Irish shadow Higgins with Love.

WR HUNTER RENFROW*
2018 Stats: 43 catches, 472 yards, one touchdown
PFF Grade: 71.3
PFF ACC Position Rank: 15th

The hero of the 2017 National Championship remains a threat for the Tigers, ranking third in catches and fourth in yards. He will be a key in this matchup as a third-down threat, potentially going against Notre Dame's nickel cornerbacks, which have been inconsistent this season.

Like others above, South Carolina was a productive game for the former walk-on with five catches for 80 yards (80.2 grade).

WR JUSTYN ROSS
2018 Stats: 34 catches, 699 yards, six touchdowns
PFF Grade: 86.7
PFF ACC Position Rank: 2nd

Even though Ross is not a starter, the true freshman has made a major impact in year one with the Tigers, grading out as the No. 2 wideout in the conference behind Higgins. He ranks second in yards and touchdowns despite having the fourth-most receptions. Ross racked up 70 yards on just two catches in a the ACC title win over Pittsburgh.

The freshman posted tat least a 90.0 grade in wins over Georgia Southern (90.2) and Duke (90.0) where he combined for seven catches for 179 yards and two touchdowns.

WR DERION KENDRICK
2018 Stats: 15 catches, 210 yards
PFF Grade: 66.0
PFF ACC Position Rank: N/A

The depth at wide receivers for the Tigers continues with another freshman in Kendrick, who added his best game of the season against South Carolina with four receptions for 51 yards and a 91.4 grade.

However, Kendrick has had eight games with just one catch or less this season.

OT MITCH HYATT*
2018 Stats: Zero sacks, 11 pressures
PFF Grade: 71.7
PFF ACC Position Rank: 3rd

The All-American tackle has performed like one this season, allowing zero sacks and just 11 pressures according to PFF. He will have his hands full on the edge with Okwara (79.6) and Kareem (77.1) aiming to create havoc in the backfield.

Hyatt has recorded four grades over 80.0 this fall with a top mark of 87.0 against Syracuse in pass blocking to go with his 65.2 run blocking grade. Keeping his sack-free status won't come easy against Notre Dame.

OG JOHN SIMPSON*
2018 Stats: One sack, six pressures
PFF Grade: 70.1
PFF ACC Position Rank: 8th

Simpson has been solid during the 2018 season next to Hyatt, giving up just one sack and six pressures. However, he has not graded out above 70.0. His top two marks of 69.8 and 68.8 came in the last two weeks against South Carolina and Pittsburgh, respectively.

Like Hyatt, Simpson has been better in pass protection at 84.5 with eight games over 79.0, but a modest 66.4 mark in run blocking with no game with a 70.0 grade or higher. Simpson ranks in the top 10 in the ACC and will likely see Tillery consistently throughout the contest.

OC JUSTIN FALCINELLI*
2018 Stats: One sack, seven pressures
PFF Grade: 72.0
PFF ACC Position Rank: 2nd

Falcinelli hit his highest grade of the year in the regular season finale with an 81.4 mark against the Gamecocks. His next highest grade was 73.0 the previous week versus Duke.

The center has also been better blocking in the pass game at 76.9 compared to 69.6 in the run. Falcinelli has registered nine games with at least a 76.1 grade in protecting Lawrence, while nearly hitting 70.0 (69.6) in the run.

He will have the tough task of facing Tillery at times, one of the nation's top-graded interior defensive linemen.

OG GAGE CERVENKA*
2018 Stats: Zero sacks, six pressures
PFF Grade: 73.4
PFF ACC Position Rank: 4th

Cervenka is the lone offensive lineman on this list that boasts a better grade in blocking for the run (75.0) than the pass (67.0). He joins Hyatt in not allowing a single sack and is also tied for the team-lead among the regulars with just six pressures given up all season.

He will enter the Cotton Bowl coming off his top performance against the pass with an 80.2 grade in the win over the Panthers.

OT TREMAYNE ANCHRUM*
2018 Stats: One sack, six pressures
PFF Grade: 70.8
PFF ACC Position Rank: 6th

Anchrum rounds out the starting unit for the Tigers with each of the five members grading out in the 70's. The right tackle has been struggling against the run the past four weeks, with four-straight grades of under 64.0 for a year mark of 66.6. The right tackle has been much better in pass protection at 79.6.

Like Hyatt, Anchrum will be tasked with trying to slow down the talented edge duo of Okwara and Kareem.

OG SEAN POLLARD
2018 Stats: Two sacks, seven pressures
PFF Grade: 67.6
PFF ACC Position Rank: 11th

Pollard has played quite a few snaps this season despite not being projected to start in the semifinal matchup with Notre Dame. Pollard has been fairly balanced this season with a 70.4 grade in pass protection and 66.3 in run blocking. In the pass game, Pollard recorded at least an 80.0 grade in six of his first eight games.

Grading The 2019 Class: Defense

Bryan Driskell • BlueAndGold.com

Notre Dame entered the early signing period with 21 committed prospects, and by the time we got through lunch on the first day of that period the Irish had 21 signed football players.

Although the Fighting Irish are still looking to add to the current class, picking up 21 players is enough to start grading the class and discussing how well the Irish have met their needs in the class.

DEFENSIVE END

SIGNED: Howard Cross III, NaNa Osafo-Mensah

Notre Dame has just two defensive ends on the roster from the 2017 and 2018 classes, and standouts Julian Okwara, Daelin Hayes and Khalid Kareem will be off the roster no later than the end of the 2019 season. Needless to say, defensive end was a huge need for Notre Dame for the 2019 class.

The Fighting Irish are in a good position right now, having landed a pair of four-star ends in the class, but a third is required for the needs to have been met from a both a talent and numbers standpoint.

Line coach Mike Elston identified Osafo-Mensah as a top target very early in the process, and his ability to go down into Texas to land a top target that was also a priority for Texas and Texas A&M was brilliant. Adding Osafo-Mensah gives Notre Dame a powerful defender that can play the drop position – which is where he was recruited – but after some time in the strength program his best position might actually be the strongside spot current manned by Kareem.

Elston also made Cross an early priority, and the New Jersey native adds power and toughness to the depth chart. His lack of measurables drags down his overall grade and is the primary reason Cross is the lowest ranked recruit in the BGI Board, but his motor, toughness, hands and ability to defend the run are why landing him was important for the Irish.

Notre Dame is still trying to land Corona (Calif.) De La Salle four-star end Isaiah Foskey, who is expected to make his decision known in February. Foskey has elite length and is an explosive edge player that fits the drop position perfectly.

Should Notre Dame land Foskey it would give the staff its best end class since it landed Okwara, Hayes, Kareem, Ade Ogundeji and Jamir Jones in the 2016 class. It would be hard to envision a better haul for Elston than to pair Foskey and Osafo-Mensah opposite each other with Cross adding depth and toughness.

Needs Grade: B- (Jumps up to A if Notre Dame lands Foskey)
Talent Grade: B (Jumps up to A if Notre Dame lands Foskey)

DEFENSIVE TACKLE

SIGNED: Jacob Lacey, Hunter Spears

Notre Dame's defensive tackle recruiting was wildly erratic from 2010 to 2016, with the Irish failing to land a single player at the position in the 2016 class. Since then Elston has completely turned around recruiting at the position. In Notre Dame's first seven classes it landed just five four-star defensive tackles, but Elston has now landed four in the last three classes, and two of them are in the 2019 class.

Lacey and Spears are both four-star recruits, they were both top targets for Elston and after he landed those two players very early in the process he stopped recruiting other top players. Neither is ranked in the Rivals250, but don't let that confuse you, these are two extremely talented football players that graded out on the BGI Board as Top 100 caliber recruits, and Spears would be a Top 50 caliber recruit if not for two knee injuries.

Lacey committed to Notre Dame over two years ago and was a prospect the Irish staff started recruiting back when he was a freshman. He projects best for the nose tackle position, but Lacey has the athletic skills and playmaking ability to play the three-technique as well. He was a good prospect as a junior, grading out as a Top 250 caliber player on the BGI Board, but his senior film was outstanding, and his quickness, power and playmaking ability boosted his grade.

Spears missed his junior season with a knee injury, but when he returned for his senior season his game had grown tremendously since his sophomore season. Spears has a combination of size, power and athleticism that is rare. His burst off the ball is exceptional, his hand play is advanced for his age and his playmaking ability is top notch. He could play three-technique or even strongside end in a Jay Hayes type role.

Lacey and Spears not only meet Notre Dame's needs at the position, they give Elston a pair of impact talents. Hard to imagine a better haul inside for the Irish.

Needs Grade: A
Talent Grade: A

LINEBACKER/ROVER

SIGNED: JD Bertrand, Osita Ekwonu, Jack Kiser, Marist Liufau

Notre Dame restocked and reloaded its linebacker depth chart with the ultra-talented 2018 class, but the staff again made the position a priority in the 2019 class. The Irish landed four more players at the position, and like it did last season, it added length and versatility at the position.

Ekwonu is listed between 6-1 and 6-2, but his length is outstanding. He is an athletic and physical player that combines top-notch range and coverage ability with a bit of nastiness as a tackler in the run game. He is a player that projects at all three linebacker positions, which is hard to find. I am really interested to see how he adapts to the strength program at Notre Dame, because I believe he is a prospect that could really see his game explode in a college system.

Despite having a number of top targets still on the board, defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Clark Lea decided during the spring that in-state standout Kiser was a player he wanted in the class. Kiser is one of the most productive and prolific players Notre Dame has ever signed, but he's also one of the most overlooked because of the level of football he comes from. Kiser will need time to develop, but he's an athletic and heady player that is likely going to surprise people down the road.

Notre Dame didn't necessarily have a need for more than two linebackers, but the staff kept at it. In November it offered Liufau and he committed shortly after. Liufau is an under-the-radar player with tremendous tools and upside. He'll need time to tap into his potential, but Liufau is the kind of three-star recruit (four-star on the BGI Board) that eventually becomes a standout. A former cornerback, Liufau has tremendous coverage ability at the position, and as a senior he did a lot of damage as a pass rusher. His three-way ability (defend the run, cover the pass, rush the QB) is as good as any linebacker outside of Shayne Simon to sign with Notre Dame since Jaylon Smith.

Five days after Liufau committed the Irish added Bertrand, another four-star recruit. Bertrand is more of a pure inside player, showing top-notch instincts, good foot quickness and sound tackling tools at the position.

Notre Dame is still trying to land Carlsbad (Calif.) High School standout Asa Turner, an extremely talented player that would be the highest ranked player the position on the BGI Board should he choose the Irish.

Needs Grade: A
Talent Grade: B+

SAFETY

SIGNED: Litchfield Ajavon, Kyle Hamilton

Notre Dame had a hard time consistently landing talented safety classes during Kelly's first five seasons in South Bend. It landed just four safeties with a four or five-star grade from 2010 to 2015 classes. A four-man haul in 2016 ended up as a two-man class after DJ Morgan moved to linebacker and Spencer Perry transferred. Both of Notre Dame's 2017 signees ended up moving positions as well.

Notre Dame landed an outstanding group of safeties in the 2018 class when it brought in standouts Derrik Allen and Houston Griffith to go with local athlete Paul Moala

That haul meant Notre Dame could focus on talent over depth in the 2019 class. It identified Ajavon and Hamilton as top targets very early on and by the end of April the staff had hit a home run at the position. Both players are ranked as Rivals100 prospects.

Hamilton is arguably the top player in the class, possessing elite length, exceptional athleticism and tremendous instincts as a player. At almost 6-4 with long limbs, he has special range on the back end. His ability to impact the run game and make plays in coverage is outstanding. Hamilton's length and speed make him a big time playmaker, and his ball skills could lead to him being a major pass disruptor at the next level.

Ajavon lacks Hamilton's length, but he's a strong tackler and an impressive downhill player. He is a quality athlete that has the tools to thrive in coverage but he must improve his technique. Ajavon is a heady player that plays with good angles, and his ability to come down into the box makes him a good fit for the Irish defensive system.

Needs Grade: A
Talent Grade: A

CORNERBACK

SIGNED: Isaiah Rutherford, K.J. Wallace

Notre Dame failed to land a single cornerback in the 2017 class, but the three-man haul in 2018 (TaRiq Bracy, Noah Boykin, D.J. Brown) restocked the depth chart and allowed Todd Lyght to focus on talent over numbers in 2019. Lyght met the depth needs in the class, landing a pair of talented players at the position.

Wallace was Notre Dame's first cornerback pick up, and he's arguably the most underrated defensive signee in the class. Another site has him as a four-star and a Top 250 player, which is more how I see him. Wallace lacks ideal size, but he's very athletic, versatile and he's a strong tackler. His tackling ability and coverage skills make him an excellent fit for the field cornerback position.

Rutherford brings the length and upside that Lyght covets at the position. He is over 6-0 and has long arms, traits that project to either cornerback spot. Rutherford is a two-way player in high school, so his technique at cornerback needs a lot of work. When his technique catches up to his raw tools he has a chance to be a really quality player.

Notre Dame did a tremendous job meeting its needs in the 2019 class at cornerback. Neither Wallace nor Rutherford are elite players, but both bring starting caliber potential to the roster, which is exactly what the staff needed to land to complement last season's class.

Needs Grade: A
Talent Grade: B

SPECIALISTS

SIGNED: P Jay Bramblett, PK Harrison Leonard (Walk-on)

Notre Dame loses punter Tyler Newsome and place kicker Justin Yoon after this season. It returns sophomore Jonathan Doerer, but despite having a powerful leg, Doerer has not been overly reliable up to this point in his career. Notre Dame desperately needed to add a player that could take over punting duties in 2019 and it needed to land a kicker that could challenge Doerer for placekicking duties.

The fact Notre Dame was able to land arguably the best punter in the nation and one of the top place kickers was outstanding, and a credit to special teams coordinator Brian Polian. The fact Polian only had to use one scholarship to make it happen was a stroke of genius.

Bramblett is an early enrollee and a tremendously gifted punter, which puts him in position to handle the job right away. Leonard needs to get stronger, but he's an accurate kicker who could push Doerer right away.

Needs Grade: A
Talent Grade: A

Grading The 2019 Class: Offense

Bryan Driskell • BlueAndGold.com

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QUARTERBACK

SIGNED: Brendon Clark

Notre Dame needed to land a quarterback with starter potential in this class, and Clark is exactly that kind of player. The road was a bit winding, with Notre Dame initially landing Cade McNamara and pushing for Graham Wentz at one point, but Clark — a former Wake Forest commit — is a player that Notre Dame, Clemson and Tennessee made a hard push for over the summer.

Despite the presence of Rivals100 quarterback Phil Jurkovec in the 2018 class and Rivals100 quarterback Drew Pyne in the 2020 class, Clark decided to commit to and sign with Notre Dame, which says a lot about his willingness to compete.

Clark earned a four-star grade on the BGI Board, and his combination of size, arm strength, running ability and championship background gives the quarterback depth chart a much-needed boost in talent and competitiveness.

Needs Grade: B+
Talent Grade: B

RUNNING BACK

SIGNED: Kyren Williams

Notre Dame signed a pair of running backs in the 2018 class — Jahmir Smith and C'Bo Flemister — and both are traditional backs with every-down skills. It needed to add just one back in the 2019 class, and the staff went after every down type players (Steele Chambers, Julius Davis, Chez Mellusi) and dual-threat players like Williams.

Chambers, Davis and Sampson James were the big names, but the entire time the staff was making a push for those backs they were also pushing for Williams. When he picked Notre Dame, the staff immediately moved onto the 2020 class. While he lacks the measurables of other top backs, Williams was incredibly productive as a senior. He rushed for 2,035 yards (11.4 yards per carry), had 725 receiving yards and accounted for 36 offensive touchdowns this past season, leading Vianney to a state championship.

His ability to make plays as a runner and pass catcher makes Williams a strong complement to Smith and Flemister. He won't ever rank high because of his lack of measurables, but his athleticism, production and versatility make him an important pickup.

Needs Grade: B
Talent Grade: B

WIDE RECEIVER

SIGNED: Kendall Abdur-Rahman, Cam Hart

Notre Dame landed three wide receivers during the early signing period for the 2018 class, and another signed up in February. Cornerback signee Joe Wilkins Jr. moved to wideout during the summer, which gave Notre Dame five players at the position in the 2018 class. That five-man haul included a Rivals100 player (Kevin Austin), a Rivals250 wideout (Micah Jones), a four-star burner (Braden Lenzy) and a player that another recruiting service ranked as the No. 150 player in the country (Lawrence Keys).

That depth — and the talent contained in that depth — meant Notre Dame could be quite picky in the 2019 class. During the spring the staff identified Hart as a top target and made quick work of his recruitment, landing him in July. The staff backed off Rivals100 receiver Kyle Ford and Rivals250 wideout Trey Knox after it landed Hart. The staff wanted to add more speed to the class, and the 6-3 Hart adds that. His combination of length and speed gives the receiver depth chart a boost in talent.

Two months later Notre Dame added Abdur-Rahman, a quarterback that is projected to move to receiver when he arrives in South Bend. Abdur-Rahman is a dynamic player with the ball in his hands, rushing for 2,534 yards and 45 touchdowns the last two seasons. He brings an after-the-catch ability to the depth chart that it really needs, and he showed more explosiveness and burst as a senior, which is why he was bumped up to a four-star grade on the BGI Board after reviewing his senior film.

Hart and Abdur-Rahman might not be highly ranked players, but the Notre Dame staff improved its wide receiver depth chart by landing these two players.

Needs Grade: B+
Talent Grade: B+

TIGHT END

SIGNED: None

Notre Dame landed the nation's premier group of tight ends in the 2017 class, bringing in a pair of Rivals100 players (Cole Kmet, Brock Wright). It added two more talented tight ends in the 2018 class (George Takacs, Tommy Tremble), which provided the roster with a major boost in talent and depth. Both Takacs and Tremble redshirted in 2018, which means they both still have four years of eligibility remaining.

The staff recruited a few tight ends in 2018, but there wasn't a player the staff made a hard push for. When it landed Rivals250 tight ends Kevin Bauman and Michael Mayer in the 2020 class, the staff decided to pass on the position in the 2019 class, which opened up room at other positions where the need was much greater.

OFFENSIVE LINE

SIGNED: Quinn Carroll, Zeke Correll, Andrew Kristofic, John Olmstead

Notre Dame has recruited the offensive line position at a very high level since Brian Kelly arrived in South Bend. The Fighting Irish signed 16 Rivals250 O-linemen under Kelly prior to the 2019 class, and seven of those signees were Rivals100 recruits. Despite that success, a two-man class in 2015 coupled with a three-man class in 2016 that saw one player leave after just one year tput the depth chart in a bit of a precarious position.

The staff landed four players in the 2018 class, which helped restock the depth chart, but last year's haul wasn't the typical high-end collection of talent that Notre Dame is used to landing. The 2019 class was loaded nationally along the offensive line, which made the need to land an elite group of linemen all the more important for the Irish staff.

Line coach Jeff Quinn made a huge splash in his first season, landing four linemen that graded out by Rivals and the BGI Board as four-star recruits. Two of those players rank as Rivals100 recruits and another checks in as the No. 111 player in the country. Only two teams in the country landed at least three Top 150 offensive linemen — Notre Dame and Alabama.

Notre Dame needed at least two tackles in the class and it got them in Rivals100 blocker Quinn Carroll and four-star Andrew Kristofic. Those two tackles ranked as the top two offensive signees in the class on the BGI Board. The number three player was Zeke Correll, whom Notre Dame recruited to play center. The fourth signee — Rivals250 big man John Olmstead — adds depth and power to the guard position.

It is a balanced haul (two outside players, two inside players), and it gives Notre Dame a major boost in talent and depth up front.

Needs Grade: A
Talent Grade: A