

# QUARTERBACKS

Ian Book is the microcosm of the current Notre Dame football program. The Fighting Irish have become a top-eight to top-15 operation, and Book has demonstrated the skill set, leadership and moxie to help Notre Dame achieve a fourth straight 10- to 12-win season.

It is a question of whether he has reached his plateau as a lower-end NFL prospect, or if he can help the offense to greater heights, specifically against the top tier (i.e., Clemson in 2018 and Georgia in 2019).

Unlike in decades past, college football champions rely more than ever on future NFL first-round picks — if not first pick overall — at quarterback. LSU's Joe Burrow, Clemson's Trevor Lawrence, Ohio State's Justin Fields, Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa and Clemson's DeShaun Watson are the recent examples.

Notre Dame's most accomplished quarterback in head coach Brian Kelly's 10 seasons, Book's three most reliable targets in 2018-19 were Chase Claypool (116 catches for 1,676 yards and 17 touchdowns), Chris Finke (90 catches for 1,027 yards and six scores) and tight end Cole Kmet (58 catches for 677 yards and six touchdowns), all of whom are gone.

Consequently, Book and the veteran line will be heavily leaned on to guide the offense that is in flux at the skill positions, and achieving chemistry and rhythm there will be pivotal.

Areas that must improve include not bailing the pocket too early, stretching the field more confidently and making quicker decisions.



IAN BOOK

PHOTO BY ANDRIS VISOCKIS

## Brian Kelly's Take

"They want to follow a guy like [Ian Book], just because of his actions from last year. He's got a ton of credibility and a lot of respect from his peers. He doesn't really need to walk around and scream and yell. He's got a presence about him, and he just needs to be Ian Book — complete a s---load of passes."

### POSITION BATTLE TO WATCH

The intrigue is at No. 2 between the 6-2, 212-pound Brendon Clark and the 5-11½, 194-pound freshman Drew Pyne, the first Irish quarterback recruit to enroll in January since Malik Zaire in 2013.

Clark possesses a powerful arm, and in a small sample size he has demonstrated confidence with the zone read. For Pyne, fundamentals and quarterback IQ could compensate for his smaller stature.

In head coach Brian Kelly's first 10 seasons, the lone quarterback recruited who was not redshirted — almost always as a freshman — was current quarterbacks coach Tommy Rees (2010-13), so the early favorite would be Clark as they vie to become the 2021 starter.

### WHO'S GONE

#### Phil Jurkovec

After bidding his time his first two seasons in 2018-19 as a reserve, the former top-100 recruit transferred to Boston College this winter.

"I'd rather not talk too much about Notre Dame," Jurkovec told the Boston media. "Ian Book is a very good player and I wish him the best. ... I don't think I got too much of an opportunity to showcase what I can do, but it was fun being out there."

### WHO'S BACK

#### Fifth-year senior Ian Book

Notre Dame's first three-year starter at quarterback since Jimmy Clausen (2007-09), Book finished 24th nationally in passing efficiency and second on the team in rushing with 546 yards. He has 6,118 career passing yards.

#### Sophomore Brendon Clark

As the No. 3 quarterback he totaled 19 total snaps during blowout wins and preserved a year of eligibility. His lone pass was a 22-yard touchdown to Braden Lenzy, and he added five carries for 33 yards.

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR/ QUARTERBACKS COACH

#### Tommy Rees — 4th Year

In addition to entering his "senior year" (fourth season) as the quarterbacks coach, the 2010-13 Fighting Irish quarterback with 31 career starts was promoted to the coordinator role this winter.



## BY THE NUMBERS

**16** Consecutive starts by Book since missing the 2018 Florida State game because of an injury. Last year Book became the third quarterback in head coach Brian Kelly's first 10 seasons to start every game, joining Tommy Rees (2013) and DeShone Kizer (2016).

The record for consecutive starts under Kelly is 23 by Kizer (the last 11 of 2015 and all 12 in 2016). Kelly has never had back-to-back seasons in which the same quarterback started every game.

**148.2** Book's career pass efficiency rating, the second highest in school history behind Kevin McDougal's 156.7 from 1990-93. McDougal attempted only 180 career passes, or 608 fewer than Book. Kizer (2014-16) is third at 147.7, while Jarious Jackson (1996-99) is No. 4 at 145.7.

**1,033** Career rushing yards by Book, which puts him in the company of Tony Rice (1987-89), Tom Clements (1972-74), Joe Theismann (1968-70) and Brandon Wimbush (2015-18) as the lone Fighting Irish signal-callers to eclipse the 1,000-yard rushing barrier.

In each of the last six seasons since 2014, the quarterback position has produced a minimum of 470 rushing yards.