

# OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

It might be a long time, if ever, Notre Dame will have as much starting experience returning along an offensive line as it does in 2020.

Not only are the 114 career starts the most, per our research, but it is the first time since Charlie Weis' debut season as Fighting Irish head coach in 2005 that Notre Dame has returned all five starters.

Technically, senior right guard Tommy Kraemer (knee) and senior right tackle Robert Hainsey (ankle) were sidelined all of last November and the bowl game because of injuries, but Kraemer's 26 career starts are tied for the most on the team and Hainsey was a 2019 captain.

With so many veterans across the board, plus a "sixth man" in senior Josh Lugg who can line up anywhere, asserting dominance up front will be vital, particularly with the top running back, receivers and tight end from 2019 gone and those positions somewhat in a state of flux.

Also encouraging is sophomore right tackle Quinn Carroll, who arrived with the highest ranking among the offensive line underclassmen (No. 68 overall prospect nationally in 2019, per Rivals) is getting some work after suffering a torn ACL last August, while classmates Zeke Correll at center and Andrew Kristofic at left tackle are more physically ready to compete after adding 20 and 12 pounds to bulk up to 290 and 292 pounds, respectively.

Notre Dame was ranked No. 2 by Pro Football Focus in its pass protection efficiency in 2019, but also establishing a more potent, standard ground game will be vital.



LIAM EICHENBERG

PHOTO BY BILL PANZICA

## BY THE NUMBERS

**15** Scholarship offensive linemen on the spring roster, including former walk-on center/guard Colin Grunhard, and now sophomore Hunter Spears, who moved from defense. Spears is working at left guard, where seniors Aaron Banks and Dillan Gibbons are out with injuries.

**46.2** Percent converted on third down last year when Notre Dame faced three yards or less to go (24 of 52):

- 21 of 32 on third-and-one for 65.6 percent.
- 2 of 10 on third-and-two for 20 percent.
- 1 of 10 on third-and-three for 10 percent.

**114** Career starts among the returning offensive linemen, the most we have found at Notre Dame since 1964, when college football fully adopted a two-platoon system (players not playing both ways on offense and defense).

## WHO'S GONE

### Trevor Ruhland

Gritty utility guard/center replaced the injured Tommy Kraemer during the final six games in 2020.

## WHO'S BACK

### Fifth-year senior Liam Eichenberg

The left tackle is lone player on the 2020 roster to start every game in 2018 and 2019, and already is projected as a potential first-round NFL pick.

### Fifth-year senior Tommy Kraemer

The right guard matches the 26 career starts of classmate Eichenberg, with nine in 2017, 10 in 2018 and seven last year.

### Senior Robert Hainsey

A 2019 captain as a junior right tackle, he is bouncing back from an ankle injury that sidelined him the final six contests last season.

### Senior Aaron Banks

The left guard has 19 consecutive starts, but will sit out this spring while recovering from surgery on a fractured foot.

### Junior Jarrett Patterson

Successfully transitioned from left tackle to center after redshirting as a 2018 freshman, and started all 13 games in 2019.

### Senior Josh Lugg

Versatile figure started in place of the injured Hainsey basically the last six games in 2019 and is the top left guard this spring in place of the shelved Banks.

## OFFENSIVE LINE COACH

### Jeff Quinn — 3rd year

Worked with head coach Brian Kelly for 21 consecutive years from 1989-2009 before Kelly was named head coach at Notre Dame and Quinn for the Buffalo Bulls.

The two were reunited in 2015 when Quinn was named offensive analyst for the Irish, and then promoted to offensive line coach after 2012-17 Irish assistant Harry Hiestand moved to the NFL.



## BGI Editor Lou Somogyi's Take

"It's notable how all five starters arrived as tackles. Both left guard Aaron Banks and center Jarrett Patterson started out as left tackles, and right guard Tommy Kraemer was a co-starter with Robert Hainsey at right tackle in 2017. That might in part explain the No. 2 national ranking the Irish had last year from Pro Football Focus in pass blocking."

## POSITION BATTLE TO WATCH

With senior left guard Aaron Banks sidelined this spring after foot surgery and probably not at an ideal 335 pounds, classmate Josh Lugg — the Swiss Army knife of the line who can play anywhere — could find himself in maybe a co-starting role much like Robert Hainsey and Tommy Kraemer did at right tackle in 2017.

Hainsey suffered a season-ending ankle injury on the opening possession last year versus Virginia Tech Nov. 2, and the 6-7, 308-pound Lugg took his place during that six-game winning streak to end the season.