

Notre Dame gets tough for title defense

SMU returns; some coaches don't

By Rick Warner
Associated Press

SMU is back on the field. Notre Dame is back on top and the ball is back on the ground for extra points and field goals. But four of the most familiar figures in college football won't be back on the sidelines for the 1989 season.

After enduring an NCAA "death sentence" that killed its football program for two years, Southern Methodist University returned Sept. 2 against Rice with a scaled-down squad and upgraded standards.

"This is the most unique situation a university ever found itself in as far as football," Athletic Director Doug Single said. "We're on our last chance here. We've got to make it work, or it's over."

To prevent another scandal, the school has instituted a slew of safeguards and reforms. All athletes must now take an ethics course, boosters are banned from recruiting and there are tests on the NCAA rules that SMU has repeatedly broken over the years.

School president A. Kenneth Pye says no more nonsense will be tolerated: "I've made it quite clear that if I find out about (cheating) we will self-report and I will recommend to the board that we drop football. Period."

Coach Forrest Gregg, who left the Green Bay Packers to return to his alma mater, enters the season with only 42 scholarship players and just three

with college game experience. One of them is wide receiver Michael Bowen, who played for SMU in 1986, then spent a year at Georgia before returning to Dallas.

"There's no pressure because we don't have anything to lose," Bowen said. "At Georgia, you have a lot to lose every game you play."

Scandal has rarely been a problem at Notre Dame, which prides itself on winning without cheating or bending the rules. The defending national champions demonstrated that again a few weeks ago by suspending All-American linebacker Michael Stonebreaker for the season and refusing to allow running back Tony Brooks back into school for disciplinary reasons.

Notre Dame coach Lou Holtz defended the actions by the university's Office of Student Affairs, which operates independently of the athletic department.

"I know they have a philosophy here in how they operate, and I trust that philosophy," said Holtz, who later learned that four other Notre Dame players won't be available this season because of injuries, academics or personal problems.

Despite the losses and a land mine schedule that includes Michigan, Southern Cal, Penn State and Miami, the Fighting Irish are talented enough to challenge for a second straight national title — a feat last accomplished by Alabama in 1979.

"We have a tradition," said Holtz, whose team opened against Virginia in the Aug. 31 Kickoff Classic. "Notre Dame has a way of rising to the occasion."

Notre Dame's first major test was against Michigan Sept. 16. Almost all of Bo Schembechler's top guns returned from a Rose Bowl team that came within six points of a perfect

season.

As athletic director, Schembechler shared in Michigan's NCAA basketball title last season. As coach, though, he has never won a national championship.

This could be the year.

"This is a difficult year for the football coach at a school

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