

Michigan Wolverines Football: Harbaugh's Crew Crushes The Irish, 45-14

John Borton • TheWolverine

Michigan doesn't have another game scheduled with Notre Dame until 2033. The Wolverines will remember this one until then and far beyond.

Jim Harbaugh's crew made its last crack at the Irish its best. U-M washed Notre Dame right out of the stadium in a 45-14 tsunami of dominance over the No. 8 Irish, before a delightedly stunned crowd of 111,909 rain-soaked fans at Michigan Stadium.

The Wolverines simply dismantled Brian Kelly's crew, piling up 437 yards to Notre Dame's 180 — the last 75 against U-M reserves when the game was long over.

Offensively, the Wolverines operated like speedboats in the slog, through a night-long downpour. They rushed for 303 yards, led by redshirt freshman running back Hassan Haskins' 149 on 20 carries.

Freshman Zach Charbonnet added 74 and a pair of touchdowns on 15 tries, while senior quarterback Shea Patterson delivered an efficient 6-of-12 passing effort with 100 yards and two TDs on a night when passing wasn't recommended.

Redshirt freshman back Hassan Haskins and the Wolverines flew right over the Irish in the rain.

"It was tough," Patterson said. "It was fun. It was a little tough to throw the ball and also to hold onto the ball. So credit to Hassan and all our backs, really all our skill players, for doing a heck of a job tonight."

Notre Dame starting quarterback Ian Book made it look plenty tough against Michigan's defense, going 8-of-25 passing for 73 yards and one touchdown against the Wolverines.

Combine that with 47 rushing yards on 31 carries (1.5-yard average), and Notre Dame looked as ineffective as a balsa wood support beam.

"I just have so much respect for the players," Harbaugh offered afterward. "Some of the recent tests, and the growth that's come from that, their mindset to work and improve, it led to a great victory."

"Defensively, it was a great performance. We were just so fast, running so good, and the knock-back in the defensive line was outstanding. We had really good coverage, and the linebackers were running. [Defensive coordinator] Don Brown called a really

M	45	10/26/2019 • ATTENDANCE 111,909				
MICHIGAN STADIUM ANN ARBOR, MI						
QT	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Tot	
Notre Dame	0	0	7	7	14	
Michigan	3	14	7	21	45	

good game. He had it wired."

Notre Dame had it short-circuited, all night long.

The effort boosted Michigan to 6-2 on the year, while the Irish fell to 5-2. From the start, the Wolverines left no doubt.

Michigan got on the scoreboard first, following a near disaster. Backed inside their own 10, the Wolverines saw Notre Dame's Bo Bauer partially block a Will Hart punt. The ball squirted out to the Notre Dame 33, where Jonathan Jones touched the ball but didn't cover it, allowing U-M freshman safety Daxton Hill to dive on it.

Given new life, the Wolverines marched 65 yards in nine plays, spurred by Charbonnet's 35-yard run. The rookie got knocked out of bounds two yards short of paydirt, and — thanks in part to a fumbled snap that lost two yards — wound up settling for sophomore placekicker Jake Moody's 21-yard field goal.

Still, on a saturated Saturday, a 3-0 lead at the 5:25 mark of the first quarter wasn't to be dismissed.

With Michigan's defense locking down the Irish (24 yards in the opening 16 minutes), the Wolverines soon cashed in for more. Patterson steered the ship without once putting it in the air on an eight-play, 59-yard touchdown drive.

Haskins carried the load early, carrying six straight times for 46 yards. Charbonnet finished the job, charging up the middle for a seven-yard touchdown to put U-M in command, 10-0, with 13:51 left in the half.

At that point, Michigan's numbers reflected the soggy setting — none through the air, but a notable 115 on the ground. The Wolverines were knocking back a usually formidable Irish front.

When Patterson did complete a pass, it proved bigger than the green blob on the weather forecast. Haskins' 20-yard run — complete with a finishing hurdle — put Michigan in Notre Dame territory. But the Wolverines faced third-and-seven at the Irish 37.

Flushed from the pocket, Patterson scrambled to his right, firing a 13-yard completion to freshman wideout Mike Sainristil. Patterson then bolted 22 yards on a keeper sweep to his left, down to the Irish 2, and Charbonnet bashed in from a yard out.

Down 17-0 with 9:52 left in the half, the Irish appeared as shocked as if Michigan had shaken down lighting from the sky.

"I saw it coming," Harbaugh said. "Just watching them prepare, watching them practice, watching the detail in the meetings and just how important it was to them. Day in,

day out, work in practice, the growth — you could see it.”

The half ended 17-0, Michigan’s defense putting the spin cycle to the washing machine in which the Irish found themselves. The Wolverines surrendered a grand total of 52 first-half yards, swamping Book and his bookends at every turn.

When Notre Dame did score, the Irish needed a massive boost to reach the end zone. Junior safety Brad Hawkins picked off a Book pass in Michigan territory, but officials waved it off, calling interference on senior viper Khaleke Hudson.

When replays revealed Notre Dame’s Chase Claypool clubbed Hudson to get separation, Michigan fans spent the rest of the third quarter booing furiously. They couldn’t stop the gift touchdown that ensued, three plays later, on a Book throwback to Claypool.

With the rain slackening and Notre Dame pulling to 17-7 with 5:27 left in the third quarter, the Irish put the damper on Michigan’s momentum — but not for long.

The Wolverines attacked back immediately, Hawkins breaking off a 49-yard run and the Irish getting flagged for a pair of pass interference penalties. Patterson then gunned an eight-yard touchdown pass to junior wideout Donovan Peoples-Jones, boosting the pad back to 17, at 24-7, at the 2:37 mark.

Notre Dame — limited to 98 total yards through three quarters — needed Irish luck and then some to come back in this one.

“We got after the quarterback,” senior safety Josh Metellus assured. “We knew once we hit him a couple of times, he was going to get a little jumpy in the pocket, not wanting to throw the football down the field. I feel like our D-line did a great job of pressuring him.”

The Wolverines made sure to pummel that notion into nothingness early in the fourth.

Patterson gunned a 34-yard strike to Sainristil before hitting junior wideout Nico Collins on a 16-yard TD strike, making it 31-7 with 11:29 left. All that remained involved seeing whether or not the Irish — with or without help — could score again.

Michigan did, getting a 27-yard touchdown run out of senior back Tru Wilson with 8:46 remaining, pushing the gaudy total to 38-7.

Redshirt sophomore quarterback Dylan McCaffrey then fired a 26-yard TD toss to Sainristil, who bounced off a pair of would-be tacklers to score with 4:23 remaining.

Notre Dame backup QB Phil Jurkovec threw a 14-yard TD pass to Javon McKinley against Michigan’s defensive backups with 3:45 to play. But by then, it didn’t matter.

“It’s good to come out on this side,” Patterson said. “It’s a feeling I know I’ll remember forever, and I’m sure everybody in that locker room will. I was just so happy to be a part of that.”

Michigan Wolverines Football Report Card: Grading A 45-14 Blowout Of ND

Chris Balas • TheWolverine

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Grading all aspects of Michigan football’s 45-14 blowout of Notre Dame Saturday night at The Big House:

Michigan Football Rushing Offense: A+

We never saw this coming, and neither did Notre Dame head coach Brian Kelly. He said his team’s lack of physicality up front defensively hasn’t been their identity this year, and he’s right — the Irish entered allowing 154.0 yards per game rushing. They have athletes and seemed to have improved despite being middle of the pack (64th nationally) in stopping the run.

Michigan’s offensive line took the fight to the Fighting Irish from the get-go. U-M rushed for 96 yards in the first quarter alone and included a couple of explosive plays that had been missing, a 35-yarder by freshman Zach Charbonnet and a 25-yard run by redshirt freshman Hassan Haskins., who would add runs of 20 and 49 yards. Senior quarterback Shea Patterson had a 22-yarder and senior running back Tru Wilson a 27-yarder on a 303-yard rushing day for the Wolverines.

It was a dominant performance from the Wolverines’ ground game, which produced three scores and averaged 5.3 yards per carry.

Michigan Football Passing Offense: B

First-half conditions were brutal, and early in the second half wasn’t much better with rain and wind. Getting the running game going was the single most important aspect of this game, but Patterson did make some big throws and his receivers some critical catches.

Freshman Mike Sainristil’s 13-yard, third-down grab in the second quarter kept a drive alive and led to a touchdown three plays later. Junior Donovan Peoples-Jones’ fingertip grab in the end zone came after the receivers drew a pair of pass-interference penalties in the third quarter and answered a Notre Dame touchdown that had cut the lead to 10.

Sainristil’s 34-yard touchdown was one of the plays of the game in the fourth quarter, and junior Nico Collins also hauled one in late when U-M was pulling away, a 16-yarder that made it 31-7.

Michigan Football Rushing Defense: A

In no way, shape or form did the Fighting Irish have any success on the ground. They tested the edges early, but the U-M defensive front reset the line of scrimmage and the linebackers were outstanding getting to the ball on the outside (as were the safeties).

Notre Dame managed only eight yards on eight carries in the first quarter, and Kelly admitted he was worried his group might be in for a long day. They simply couldn’t run the ball — no single Irish player finished with more than 15 total yards on the

ground or averaged greater than 3.0 yards per carry.

It didn't help that senior running back Tony Jones Jr., who had averaged 7.0 yards per carry coming into the game, left in the first half with cartilage damage to his ribs, but he hadn't had any success, regardless. Notre Dame rushed for only 11 yards on nine designed first-down runs through the first three quarters when the game was still in doubt.

Michigan Football Passing Defense: A

The Wolverines were fortunate that Chase Claypool dropped a ball in the first quarter after getting behind the Michigan defense — a hurry by senior Josh Uche and the wind had something to do with it, but it would have been a big play after quarterback Ian Book escaped heavy pressure.

That, though, was about it other than a couple of outstanding sideline catches by Irish receivers. Five plays accounted for 102 of the Irish's 133 passing yards, and two of those plays came when the Wolverines had a huge fourth-quarter lead.

Book and backup Phil Jurkovec were harassed all night by the Michigan defense, though sacked only twice. U-M had five quarterback hurries, and the secondary was lockdown in coverage much of the game. The Irish didn't record a passing play that went longer than 28 yards, and that didn't happen until Notre Dame's final offensive drive.

Michigan Football Special Teams: C+

Junior receiver Donovan Peoples-Jones' 16-yard punt return was the highlight of the return game. He's still misjudging when (and when not) to field punts, and it cost the Wolverines a lot of field position Saturday.

The kick return game, too, isn't as explosive as it should be. Freshman Giles Jackson returned only one for 23 yards Saturday night.

Redshirt junior Will Hart kicked another into the end zone on a punt, though freshman Dax Hill could have played it better, and the coverage teams were strong. Notre Dame ran back one punt for zero yards and three kickoffs for 46 with a long of 20.

Sophomore kicker Jake Moody made his only field goal attempt (21 yards).

Offense Notes: Hassan Haskins, U-M Ground Game Put On Dominating Effort

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

The Michigan Wolverines' football team put together an impressive rushing performance against Notre Dame on Saturday night, accumulating 303 yards on the ground while also averaging 5.3 yards per carry in its 45-14 win.

Redshirt freshman running back Hassan Haskins led the way with 149 yards on 20 carries, while freshman running back Zach Charbonnet chipped in another 74 yards and two scores. Senior Tru Wilson and redshirt freshman Christian Turner both contributed as well, with each posting an average of at least 7.5 yards per carry in limited action.

Wilson was the only U-M running back brought down behind the line of scrimmage — and just one time.

On a windy and rainy night in Ann Arbor, it was clear the Wolverines wanted to establish the rushing attack early and often, attempting a season-high 57 runs. If the two sacks on senior quarterback Shea Patterson are removed, the Wolverines averaged 6.5 yards per carry as a team.

Charbonnet scored the first touchdown of the night when he found the end zone on a seven-yard run at 13:51 mark of the second quarter, putting U-M up 10-0 at the time.

The freshman cashed in again on U-M's ensuing possession (this time from a yard out), giving the Maize and Blue a 17-0 lead with 9:52 remaining before halftime.

The Wolverines had already compiled 162 yards on the ground at that point, and finished the first half with 167.

Wilson joined in on the action when he found pay dirt from 27 yards out with 9:13 left in the game, giving Michigan a comfortable 38-7 advantage. The score was the first of the season for Wilson and only the second of his career.

"Offensively, we made some creases and had some really crisp blocks, and the backs were squeezing through them and breaking tackles," head coach Jim Harbaugh said afterward. "We hit a trap play early, and that was big. We hit another couple inside runs, hit a couple outside runs. [Offensive coordinator] Josh [Gattis] did a nice job with the running game — inside then outside and then RPOs [run-pass options] started clicking."

"It was really well done."

The 303 rushing yards Notre Dame allowed were the most the Irish had surrendered in a game since yielding 320 to Navy on Nov. 5, 2016.

On the flip side, it was the most the Wolverines had compiled in a contest since logging 320 in a 38-13 blowout of Wisconsin last October.

Michigan Football's Overall Offensive Production Continues To Excel

Ever since U-M posted just 10 points in its Oct. 5 win over Iowa, its offense has steadily picked up the production.

The Maize and Blue have averaged 36 points over their last three games — which include a pair of top-10 opponents — and have racked up at least 417 yards in all three outings (including 437 on Saturday).

Notre Dame had not allowed any of its last 20 opponents to exceed 30 points, which was the longest active streak in the nation. U-M posted 45 on the Irish, marking the most points they had yielded in a game since Nov. 26, 2016 in a 45-28 loss to USC.

The 437 yards Michigan compiled were also the most ND had given up since surrendering 538 to Clemson in last season's College Football Playoff.

"The second half of the Penn State game was when I think we found our stride," senior quarterback Shea Patterson said in the postgame. "We realized after that game and going into this week, we've got to come out that way from start to finish. We can't come out flat and expect to make a heroic comeback in the end."

"We've got to help out our defense. Our defense played lights out tonight, and I thought we executed all night offensively. The results spoke for themselves."

Miscellaneous Michigan Football Notes

- The 45 points were the second most Michigan had ever scored on Notre Dame, trailing only the 47 it posted in a 47-21 victory in 2006.

- Redshirt sophomore quarterback Dylan McCaffrey's 26-yard touchdown pass to freshman wideout Mike Sainristil in the fourth quarter was his first of the season and the third of his career.

Sainristil's score was also his first career, while his 73 yards receiving were a new single-game best.

- The 31-point win was U-M's largest margin of victory against an AP top-10 squad since Oct. 1, 1977, when it took down No. 5 Texas A&M, 41-3.

- Saturday's game marked the first time all year the Wolverines did not turn the ball over. After committing nine through its first three games, U-M has only had five giveaways over its last five tilts.

- Patterson only completed six of his 12 passes for 100 yards, but also tossed two touchdowns with no picks.

- His pair of scoring throws (a 16-yarder to junior receiver Nico Collins and an eight-yarder to junior wideout Donovan Peoples-Jones) marked the fourth time this year he had tossed at least two touchdowns in a game, and the 11th time he had done so as a Wolverine.

- Michigan averaged 364 yards through its first three games of the season (wins over Middle Tennessee State and Army, and a loss at Wisconsin), but has tallied 418 per outing in the five since.

- Haskins made his first career start at running back and had a career-high 20 carries, breaking his previous high of 13. His 149 yards were also a career best, and were the most by a Wolverine since Karan Higdon racked up 156 last season in a 49-3 win over Western Michigan on Sept. 8.

- The home team has gone 15-3 in the series since 1997 and won the last six in the matchup. The last visiting team to grab a triumph was when Michigan went into South Bend and beat the Irish in 2010, 28-24.

- The victory was Harbaugh's first over Notre Dame as Michigan's coach. His record as a player against the Irish was 2-0, then he went 2-2 as the head man at Stanford and now 1-1 at U-M.

- Charbonnet's two touchdowns gave him nine on the year, which are the most on the team. It was also his third multi-TD game of the season.

Defense/Special Teams Notes: U-M Smothers Notre Dame In Every Aspect

Austin Fox • TheWolverine

The Michigan Wolverines' football defense shut down Notre Dame's offense in every phase on Saturday night, holding the Irish to just 180 yards en route to a 45-14 win.

The effort marked the Irish's fewest in a game since compiling 113 in a 10-3 loss at North Carolina State on Oct. 8, 2016 that was played during hurricane conditions.

The windy and rainy elements Saturday in Ann Arbor certainly weren't ideal for either offense to move the ball efficiently, but it was obvious from an early juncture that Notre Dame was going to have a difficult time scoring.

The Irish punted on five of their six first-half possessions on their way to just 52 yards of offense at the break, with their lone other drive resulting in a failed fourth-down attempt.

Outside of the two scoring series Notre Dame strung together after the break, Michigan's defense forced it to go three-and-out on five other possessions and also recovered an Irish fumble (forced by redshirt sophomore defensive end Luiji Vilain, grabbed by freshman safety Daxton Hill) midway through the fourth quarter.

The end result saw Notre Dame finish with 133 yards through the air and only 47 on the ground.

"Defensively, it was a great, great performance," head coach Jim Harbaugh exclaimed in the postgame. "We're just so fast. We were running so good, and the knock back on the defensive line was outstanding."

"There was great coverage, and the linebackers were running around. [Defensive coordinator] Don Brown called a great game. He really had it wired, and I just can't say enough about that."

The Maize and Blue were especially difficult on redshirt junior quarterback Ian Book, who only completed 8 of his 25 passes for 73 yards (redshirt freshman Phil Jurkovec had the club's other 60 passing yards).

Redshirt freshman linebacker Cam McGrone's 12 tackles led the team and were a career high, while junior defensive end Kwity Paye paced the club with two TFLs.

"We saw it as disrespect thinking they could take the ball first and make something happen," McGrone said afterward, discussing Notre Dame's decision to receive the ball to open the game. "We had to show them from the start we're here to play, and they can't get anything on us."

"They thought we couldn't read our keys well, and they didn't believe in our speed and our ability to get to the edges."

Early Special Teams Play Swings Momentum

Although redshirt junior Will Hart's punt was blocked deep in U-M territory to conclude the Wolverines' opening series of the night, it still traveled all the way to the Michigan 33-yard line.

That's where freshman safety Daxton Hill made an alert play by falling on the football after an Irish defender attempted to scoop it up, making it a live ball.

The Wolverines retained possession following Hill's recovery and, in some ways, set the tone for what the night was going to be.

Michigan wound up getting a 21-yard field goal from sophomore kicker Jake Moody after the fumble recovery to go up 3-0, and never really looked back from that point on.

"Will Hart made a big play early in the game, catching that high snap and getting the punt off," Harbaugh said. "And then Dax ended up recovering the fumble. That was big in that first drive."

"Dax is gifted," junior center Cesar Ruiz added. "His talents are God-given. He flies around, and we see him making plays from the sidelines. It was good seeing him showcase his abilities and contribute and be a factor for our team."

Moody also handled all six of Michigan's extra point. Redshirt junior kicker Quinn Nordin missed last week's Penn State game with injury, and although Harbaugh wasn't asked specifically about the redshirt junior on Saturday, it's fair to assume he was still working through his ailment.

Miscellaneous Michigan Football Notes

- U-M has held four of its last five opponents to 64 rushing yards or fewer.
- After forcing two Irish turnovers, Michigan has now registered eight takeaways in its last four games.
- Daxton Hill grabbed the first two fumble recoveries of his career on Saturday, first on the blocked punt and then at 6:18 of the fourth quarter after Vilain forced an Irish gaffe.

- Junior linebacker Josh Ross missed his fifth straight game with injury, but McGrone has been excellent during that time period. In the last five games, McGrone has totaled 36 stops, 6.0 tackles for loss, 3.5 sacks, four quarterback hurries and a forced fumble.

- The 31-point triumph marked U-M's third biggest margin of victory in the Notre Dame series, trailing only 38-0 wins in 2003 and 2007.

- The victory extended Michigan's home winning streak against Notre Dame to five games, with the Irish's last win in Ann Arbor coming in 2005.

- Saturday was the 44th meeting between the two schools, with U-M improving its record to 25-18-1 in the series. It was also the ninth primetime showdown between the two, with the home squad having won each.

- This weekend's contest was the last scheduled meeting between the rivals until 2033 and 2034. The two schools have met in 33 of the last 42 seasons.

- Junior safety Brad Hawkins had an interception negated in the third quarter on a pass interference call against senior viper Khaleke Hudson. It would have been the first pick of Hawkins' career.

- The Maize and Blue lengthened their home winning streak to 12 games, with their last setback at The Big House having occurred on Nov. 25, 2017, to Ohio State.

- Paye's sack in the third quarter marked his sixth straight game he has recorded at least half of a tackle for loss. He now has 10 over his last six games.

Michigan Wolverines Football: Five Best Players Of The Game

John Borton • TheWolverine

Michigan's five best players of the game gets an asterisk in this one. The top five players could well consist of U-M's offensive line, which paved the way for 303 rushing yards. Or Michigan's defensive line plus a linebacker, for the way the Wolverines dominated up front on that side of the ball.

But here representing them are others who piled up the numbers in a statement win over Notre Dame:

1. Redshirt freshman running back Hassan Haskins: Haskins earned nearly half of Michigan's gaudy rushing tally, gaining 149 yards on 20 tries. He averaged 7.4 yards per carry and led the charge past the Irish on the ground. He was never brought down behind the line of scrimmage in a dominant effort.

2. Redshirt freshman linebacker Cam McGroone: McGroone roamed all over, swarming like the Michigan defense as a whole. He recorded a game-high 12 tackles, with one quarterback hurry, in a continuation of his high-level performance the last few games. Half of his dozen stops came within two yards of the line of scrimmage.

3. Senior linebacker Jordan Glasgow: Glasgow is another U-M defender who seemed like he was everywhere on the night. He was only credited with four tackles, but notched a quarterback hurry, made some key stops and helped the Wolverines keep Notre Dame bottled up all night.

4. Freshman running back Zach Charbonnet: Charbonnet rushed 15 times for 74 yards and a pair of touchdowns, one of four U-M rushers who averaged at least 4.9 yards per carry and totaled at least 31 yards. Charbonnet also proved flawless handling the football and, like Haskins, was never tackled for loss.

5. Senior quarterback Shea Patterson: Patterson's passing numbers were predictably humble (6 of 12 for 100 yards, two touchdowns) in the pouring rain. But he handled the football on every play and directed an offense that didn't turn it over once. That proved no small achievement on the night.

The visitors entered the game 5-1, ranked No. 8 nationally and thinking playoff. They left thinking what the heck happened?

Notre Dame safety Alohi Gilman put it bluntly in the post-mortem for the out-fought Irish.

"We got beat," he said. "They're a better team than us. It's not a good feeling, but we're going to learn from this."

The Michigan Wolverines' defense, led by redshirt freshman linebacker Cam McGroone's (No. 44) 12 tackles, pounded Notre Dame into the soggy turf all night long.

Michigan, meanwhile, learned the hard way over the past few weeks. They weren't ready for a battering of their own at Wisconsin. They learned at Penn State, in a white-out, you've got to win by 10 to win by one, and a 21-0 hole means sudden death — and not the good kind.

"Our problem, as a team, is that we start slow," senior safety Josh Metellus said. "Once we pick it up, it's hard to stop us. It's hard to put a cap on it. Once we started fast in that first quarter, and we didn't give up a first-quarter touchdown or any first-quarter points, I knew the defense was going to be able to hold on through the rest of the game."

They didn't start slowly this time around. They started with a 17-0 first-half lead, despite the game-long downpour. When officials gifted back a touchdown after a genuinely bizarre pass interference call, the Wolverines poured it on.

They rushed for 303 yards in the bog to Notre Dame's 47. They racked up 23 first downs to ND's dozen. The team that gave the football away like candy from Thanksgiving Day parade floats earlier didn't turn it over one time.

Instead, they turned the Irish over their knee and spanked the South Benders like they were furious.

And they were.

"We play angry every game," Metellus insisted. "Coach [Don Brown's] motto is, we play aggressive. Solve all your problems with aggression. We try to play angry every game, even more angry because we let a game slip away from us last week. We came in with the mindset that we had to dominate no matter what."

"We knew what kind of team we were capable of being, and it took us a long time to get going. Once we got going, we knew we were capable of doing it. It was not a shock."

Redshirt freshman linebacker Cam McGroone insisted the Wolverines were offended that the Irish won the opening toss and elected to receive.

"We saw it as disrespect, thinking they could take the ball first and make something happen," McGroone said. "We had to show them from the start we're here to play and they can't get anything on us."

Meanwhile, Michigan's gains left rain-soaked tire tracks on those formerly gleaming gold helmets.

Wolverine Watch: Angry Assault On The Irish

John Borton • The Wolverine

Notre Dame fans slogged their way into Michigan Stadium, ready to see a titanic effort by the No. 8 Irish.

The only Titanic sensation they came away with involved a sinking feeling. Michigan's defense played iceberg, stopping Notre Dame cold.

The Irish, averaging a healthy 39.2 points per game coming into their showdown with old rival Michigan, didn't score a legitimate point against U-M's starters in a 45-14 pummeling. If not for a bogus pass interference penalty on the Wolverines, Notre Dame would have drawn a soggy donut in the downpour versus the front-liners.

As it was, Michigan's defense made the Irish look all wet even more than Mother Nature. They came away with 180 total yards, roughly the walk they took up the Michigan Stadium tunnel back to their busses. Seventy-five of those were piled up on a drive against backups when the busses were warming in the rain.

Did the monsoon engulfing The Big House have something to do with it? Maybe ... but the U-M offense saw no trouble ringing up 45 points on a rain-saturated evening.

The Wolverines took the momentum they built in the second half of the Penn State game, added the frustration from that loss and balled it into a fist. They smashed the Irish in their shimmering helmets, over and over and over.

"We said in the locker room we knew what kind of game it was going to be," junior center Cesar Ruiz insisted. "We knew we'd be grinding and pounding, and it's the game we'd been waiting for. We knew today was going to be the day we'd be able to showcase it."

They showcased it, all right. They laid the biggest embarrassment on all things Irish since Tom Cruise tried to deliver the accent in "Far And Away."

What's it mean for the Wolverines, whose Big Ten title ship has likely sailed? Just this — the potential Harbaugh insisted was there might be showing up in a big way.

"It's just a wonderful job by them," Harbaugh said. "They've had some tests, they've taken some criticism, but to have the mindset to keep working and keep growing, that leads to really great victories and success like our players had tonight. It's a great lesson for them because not everybody can do that."

They did it against the Irish, in a series everybody remembers. And they did it with the kind of emphasis that bodes well for the future.

U-M proved it learned from last week's devastating loss at Penn State, when an early 21-0 deficit proved too large to overcome.

"I think the second half of the Penn State game, I thought we found our stride," said quarterback Shea Patterson. "We realized after that game, going into this week, from Monday's practice that offensively we've got to come out that way start to finish.

"We can't come out flat and expect to make a heroic comeback in the end. We've got to help out our defense — our defense played lights-out tonight. I thought we executed all night offensively. The results spoke for themselves.

The Wolverines seemed more prepared than Notre Dame, which was coming off a bye. And they didn't allow early mistakes like a roughing the punter penalty or blocked punt to spiral the game out of control. Nor was the offense adversely affected by the downpour that persisted through the first half; although Michigan passed the ball just four times in the first half, it still moved down the field thanks to the run game.

Sam Cooper, Yahoo Sports: No. 8 Notre Dame bounced from playoff contention in embarrassing 45-14 loss to No. 19 Michigan

Now 6-2 and 4-2 in Big Ten play, Michigan is the clear third-best team in the Big Ten East. But at least the Wolverines are improving.

The offense was underwhelming all year, but seemed to get some things going in the second half against Penn State. But Michigan fell behind 21-0 in that one, and the late flurry of offensive execution was not enough to pull off the upset in Happy Valley.

But it certainly carried over against the Irish, despite the rainy conditions. Notably, the weather sort of forced Michigan to revert back to its power-heavy, run-first offense that it employed for years under Jim Harbaugh.

The Wolverines have three very winnable games in the coming weeks: Maryland, Michigan State and Indiana. After that Ohio State will visit The Big House. If Michigan keeps playing at a high level, perhaps that game will be more competitive than we all anticipated.

Chip Patterson, CBSSports.com: Michigan vs. Notre Dame score, takeaways

1. Harbaugh just doubled his number of top-10 wins: The Wolverines are now 2-10 against top-10 teams under Harbaugh, and that's not insignificant considering the context of Saturday night's win. Harbaugh was the subject of coaching rumor mill chatter, and the conversation of a supposed "exit strategy" had enough reach for him to send a letter to parents calling the claims "total crap." To follow that week with a win against a top-10 opponent both calms any consternation in the moment and adds a signature win for fans during a season where the Big Ten -- and beating Ohio State -- appear to be out of reach yet again.

Harbaugh's teams have been able to beat up on less-talented opponents throughout his tenure, but punching up has not been where his program has had great success. The rain indeed played a huge role, but to have Michigan better prepared to deal with the elements suggests the coaching staff and the locker room are not being shaken by what Harbaugh has described as "enemies"

What They're Saying: Michigan Wolverines Football 45, Notre Dame 14

Ryan Tice • TheWolverine

The Michigan Wolverines football team made their national statement with a 45-14 blowout of the Notre Dame Fighting Irish Saturday night at The Big House.

Here's a look around the web at what they're saying about the Wolverines after the big-time win:

Orion Sang, Detroit Free Press: Michigan football proves it's headed in right direction after thrashing Notre Dame

The Wolverines led by three possessions early in the second quarter and never trailed. And when Notre Dame cut the deficit to 17-7 in the third quarter, Michigan responded with 28 consecutive points.

Saturday night's game was different from everything we've seen from the Wolverines this season in big moments. They took a 17-0 lead into halftime. The offense didn't need a deficit to jolt to life. Instead, Michigan marched the ball down the field and scored on its first three possessions.

The defense, meanwhile, didn't give up any explosive plays and shut down both the run and pass.

Bill Bender, Sporting News: Michigan, Jim Harbaugh pour it on Notre Dame in potential season-reversing win

Michigan has a signature victory for Harbaugh to build on for the rest of 2019 — one that will quiet the NFL rumor-mongering and top-10 failure criticism for at least for a few weeks. The Wolverines have road trips to Maryland and Indiana, but it's the November home games against Michigan State and No. 3 Ohio State where the true referendums will pick back up.

After all, Michigan is 29-4 at home under Harbaugh, and the Spartans and Buckeyes have dealt those four losses. This Michigan team responded after the latest loss at No. 6 Penn State on Oct. 19. While the criticisms picked up and the rain fell hard, Michigan picked the least-expected time to play its best game. Maybe that's the turning point for this program, and for the coach who finally won that big game as an underdog.

"I saw it coming," Harbaugh said. "Watching them prepare. Watching them practice. Watching the details in the meetings and how important it was to them. Day in day out, the work in practice, the growth, you can see it."

Shawn Windsor, Detroit Free Press: Jim Harbaugh keeps his promise as Michigan football finds its identity

Now, maybe the No. 7 Fighting Irish aren't that good. They arrived in Ann Arbor with a 5-1 record, a loss to Georgia and a narrow win over middling Southern Cal.

Still, they were a top-10 team. A playoff team a year ago. A roster built on top-flight recruiting classes and several future pros.

So ... U-M took the field against a team of equal — or near-equal — talent and blitzed it. The defense played a lot like it did in the second half at Penn State, forcing repeated three-and-outs.

The Wolverines forced nine punts — nine. The held the Fighting Irish to 47 yards rushing and 133 passing, nearly 300 yards below its combined average.

Yes, it's fair to wonder about Notre Dame's schedule. It's no longer fair, though, to wonder about U-M's mental toughness.

Not anymore.

A week ago, Michigan showed that Harbaugh was right about his team getting close.

It also showed how far it had come since Wisconsin, when that early fumble led to droopy heads and a dispirited sideline. The Wolverines didn't yet know how to compete that day in Madison. Nor were they quite sure who they were.

Though they had a sense of what was inside of them.

"I believe we've always had it," said sophomore linebacker Cameron McGrone. It just took until "the second half against Penn State (to find) what we can do."

TheWolverine.com

Your No. 1 Resource

for extensive Michigan Football coverage

**FREE Trial
60 Days**

*Use Promo Code **BLUE60**



RECRUITING SCOOP
Breaking news, team and individual rankings, features on every commitment; over 10 years of archived recruiting information.

DAILY TEAM COVERAGE
Go behind the scenes with exclusive coverage on the Wolverines throughout the season.

EXPERT ANALYSIS
In-depth analysis by our seasoned experts in the field.

PROSPECT VIDEOS
See all of tomorrow's top Michigan prospects in action on our top-quality prospect videos.

LIVELY MESSAGE BOARDS
Interact with other Michigan fans across the country and discuss the state of the Wolverines.

Rivals.com Mobile
Providing you the best coverage of Michigan football, basketball and recruiting – on the go!



THE WOLVERINE NOW ■ THEWOLVERINEONDEMAND.COM ■ 800-421-7751