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GAME NOTES • WEEK 5

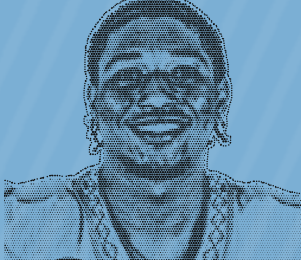




NOTRE DAME

4-0 (0-0 conf)

VS





NORTH CAROLINA

2-1 (0-1 conf)

WEEK 5 • SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2026 • KENAN MEMORIAL STADIUM • TIME TBA ET

THE SERIES

ND leads 21-2

For the 24th time in the series (dating to 1949), Notre Dame faces North Carolina at Kenan Memorial Stadium. ND leads 21-2. Last meeting: 09/24/22 — ND 45-32 (UNC).

A ND WIN WOULD... Extend the series lead to 22-2 and stretch ND won 5.

A UNC WIN WOULD... Cut the deficit to 21-3, snapping ND won 5.

In ND: 14-0 • In UNC: 7-2
• Neutral / Bowls: 0-0 •
Streak: ND won 5

DATE	WINNER	SCORE	SITE
09/24/22	ND	45-32	UNC
10/30/21	ND	44-34	ND
11/27/20	ND	31-17	UNC
10/07/17	ND	33-10	UNC
10/11/14	ND	50-43	ND
10/11/08	UNC	24-29	UNC

COOL STATS & PROGRAM LORE

► **Program frame:** ND at UNC — series / conference boards on file.

COACHING STAFFS & COORDINATORS

ND: HC: Marcus Freeman

OC: Mike Denbrock

DC: Chris Ash

UNC: HC: Bill Belichick

OC: Freddie Kitchens

DC: Stephen Belichick

GAMEDAY

Kenan Memorial Stadium

Time TBA ET • Saturday, October 3, 2026

TONIGHT'S GAME

► **Notre Dame at North Carolina:** Notre Dame (4-0 (0-0 conf)) visits North Carolina (2-1 (0-1 conf)). Saturday, October 3, 2026 at Kenan Memorial Stadium, Time TBA ET.

► **The series never sleeps:** For the 24th time in the series (dating to 1949), Notre Dame faces North Carolina at Kenan Memorial Stadium. ND leads 21-2. Last meeting: 09/24/22 — ND 45-32 (UNC).

► **Under center:** CJ Carr opens opposite Billy Edwards. HC Marcus Freeman vs Bill Belichick; OC/DC Mike Denbrock/Chris Ash vs Freddie Kitchens/Stephen Belichick.

► **2026 so far:** ND is 4-0 at 42.2 PPG / 8.2 PAPG (1,667 total yards, pass Rk 84/293); UNC is 2-3 at 26.0 PPG / 19.9 PAPG (485 total yards, pass Rk 68/293). The live ledger heading into kickoff.

THE OPEN

Notre Dame walks into Kenan Memorial Stadium unbeaten at 4-0 and holding a 21-2 lead in this series, but Bill Belichick and North Carolina get the 24th meeting in Chapel Hill with an upset very much alive. The number that decides it: Notre Dame has turned 14 of 18 red-zone trips into touchdowns, a 77.8% finishing rate that only holds up tonight if CJ Carr keeps getting clean looks. Carr already has 6 touchdown passes and 726 yards in 2026, and Marcus Freeman's defense arrives ranked 2nd in the country in points allowed per game. North Carolina has the receipts too, 214 rush yards in a 20-28 loss at Clemson, so this one tilts on pocket rhythm and who finishes drives.

MATCHUP NOTES

► **Notre Dame brings its new rushing record holder:** Autry Denson rushed for 130 yards last game, raising a career total to 4,614. The career mark is the human-interest lead; reestablishing the run is the football question.

GAME KEYS

► **Pocket duel:** CJ Carr put up 53/73 for 726 yards and 6 TDs through Week 4; Billy Edwards answered with 44/78, 611 yards and 3 TDs through Week 4. Early-down rhythm decides who owns the scoreboard. Last H2H QB line: CJ Carr: 14/22, 237 pass yds, 3 TD / 1 INT, 10 rush.

► **Protect the pocket, or lose it:** ND's line graded pass-block (PB) 81.6 / run-block (RB) 64.0 into Leroy Jackson (1 sack, 4 pressures, Pro Football Focus (PFF) 75.7). up from 68.3 pass-block a year ago, with Guerby Lambert logging 160 RT snaps at PB 72.1. Flip side: UNC PB 61.0 / RB 52.6 stares down Boubacar Traore (2 sacks, 9 pressures). down from 71.4 pass-block a year ago. The first clean pocket wins the early script.

► **Finish or settle:** ND punched in 14/18 red-zone trips (77.8%) with 3 FG-only in 2026; UNC punched in 12/21 red-zone trips (57.1%) with 7 FG-only in 2026. Every trip inside the 20 is a seven-or-three referendum.

► **Keep the chains moving:** ND converted 22/78 third downs (28.2%) in 2026; UNC converted 39/145 third downs (26.9%) in 2026. After incomplete early downs, this is the swing that turns drives into scoring opportunities.

FROM THE BEAT

"They're a good football team obviously. They're undefeated and have been pretty impressive in all their wins, particularly two of them where they were ahead 35-0 at halftime. They're a strong team, they don't make many mistakes and they make you earn everything." — Bill Belichick, North Carolina head coach · Fighting Irish Wire (relaying UNC Coach's Corner on Tar Heels Sports Network) · Oct. 1, 2026

"You don't win as much as he's won without being a great coach and leader. You see it in the way his team plays. They're disciplined. They don't have a lot of pre-snap penalties... You have to find a way to beat them; you're not going to trick them." — Marcus Freeman, Notre Dame head coach · On3 · Sept. 28, 2026

► **Belichick's hot-seat math:** Reporting that "six wins" gets UNC's power brokers "comfortable moving forward" reframes Saturday as an audition under a Hall of Fame coach whose future in Chapel Hill rides on results, not résumé · Tar Heels Wire · Oct. 1, 2026

► **Fourth-down showdown:** Belichick, one of the game's most aggressive fourth-down gamblers, meets a Freeman-led Irish program that's 44-of-68 (64.7%) on fourth down since 2024 — a hidden leverage duel inside the matchup · South Bend Tribune · Oct. 1, 2026

ND @ UNC GAME NOTES COVER

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2025 SEASON RECAPS

ND 2025 SEASON RECAP

10-2 · 42.0 PPG / 17.6 PAPG · H 6-1 / A 4-1

LINE		
Yds / Pass / Rush	5502 · 3061 · 2453	Rk 59/314
TD (P/R) · Sacks/INT	25/38 · 34/21	Rk 25 · Rk 9
3rd · RZ	45.6% · 73.6%	
C.J. Carr	195/293, 2741 yds, 24/6	QB
Jeremiyah Love	199-1372, 18 TD	RB
Malachi Fields	36-630, 5 TD	WR

FOUR POINTS FROM 12-0

Notre Dame opened 2025 at **0-2**: a **24-27** loss at Miami on Aug. **31** on a **47**-yard field goal with **1:04** left, then **40-41** at home to Texas A&M on Sept. **13** on a touchdown at **0:13**. Both opponents made the CFP.

TEN STRAIGHT BY DOUBLE DIGITS

The Irish answered the **0-2** start with **10** consecutive wins, every one by double digits, closing **10-2** (**6-1** home, **4-1** road).

PUNCH-IT-IN PRODUCTION

Notre Dame averaged **42.0** points per game (4th of **314** teams) and allowed **17.6** (14th of **314**), with **5,502** total yards, **3,061** through the air and **2,453** on the ground, **38** rushing touchdowns to **25** passing.

THE 70-BURGER

A **70-7** rout of Syracuse on Nov. **22**, 2025 was the program's highest output since 1930 outside a **73-0** win over Haskell in 1932; **13.7** rushing yards per attempt that day set a school record.

LOVE'S FOUR-SCORE HALF

Jeremiyah Love scored four first-half touchdowns at Arkansas on Sept. **27**, 2025, tying the program single-half record, and finished 2025 with **1,372** rushing yards and **18** TDs.

PRICE'S TRIPLE-DIP

Jadarian Price scored three touchdowns against Purdue on Sept. **20**, 2025, including a **100**-yard kick return, and closed the season with **674** rushing yards and **11** scores.

CARR TAKES THE KEYS

First-time starter C.J. Carr completed **195** of **293** passes for **2,741** yards, **24** touchdowns and **6** interceptions.

BALLHAWKS UP FRONT

The defense intercepted **21** passes (9th of **314** teams), logged **34** sacks and **69** tackles for loss, and limited opponents to **45.6%** on third down and a **73.6%** red-zone TD rate.

UNC 2025 SEASON RECAP

8-16 · 19.8 PPG / 26.5 PAPG · H 4-7 / A 4-9

LINE		
Yds / Pass / Rush	7768 · 5012 · 2760	Rk 13/314
TD (P/R) · Sacks/INT	25/28 · 32/15	Rk 33 · Rk 30
3rd · RZ	34.4% · 55.9%	
Eric Gibson	233/357, 2533 yds, 11/11	QB
Mathias Price	110-483, 3 TD	RB
Carver Cheeks	71-929, 6 TD	WR

A DEBUT GONE WRONG

With ESPN's College GameDay in Chapel Hill, North Carolina lost its opener **14-48** to TCU on Sept. **2**, 2025, setting the tone for a **4-8**, **2-6** ACC season.

BELICHICK'S YEAR ONE

Bill Belichick's first college season produced the program's first bowl-less finish since 2018 and its worst record since that same year; UNC tied for the third-worst mark in the ACC.

ONLY SOFT LANDINGS

The four wins came against Charlotte, FCS Richmond, Stanford and Syracuse. North Carolina went **0-8** against FBS teams that finished with five or more wins and beat no FBS opponent with a winning record.

SCORING ON EMPTY

The Tar Heels averaged **19.3** points per game (119th in FBS scoring) and **288.8** total yards per game (129th), while allowing **24.5** points per game.

SUFFERING THROUGH THE CLOSE ONES

A **16-17** home loss to Virginia on Oct. **25**, 2025 and an **18-21** loss at Cal on Oct. **18** kept a thin offense within reach; five of the eight defeats still came by double digits.

SHIPP LEADS THE AIR GAME

Receiver Jordan Shipp paced the attack with **54** catches for **574** yards and **6** touchdowns; Kobe Paysour added **34** receptions for **428** yards.

COMMITTEE BACKFIELD

Carries split four ways: Demon June (**84** for **464** yards, **2** TD), Benjamin Hall (**71-274-2**), Davion Gause (**61-258-3**) and dual-threat quarterback Giovanni Lopez (**86-133-3**).

QUARTERBACK SHUFFLE

Giovanni Lopez led the passing room with **1,747** yards and a **10**-to-**5** touchdown-to-interception line on **170-of-261**; Max Johnson added **437** yards and **2** scores off the bench.



2026 LAST OUTING – NARRATIVE, ADVANCED ANALYTICS & BOX

ND LAST OUTING – WEEK 4 (SEP 26, 2026)

W 49-10 at PUR

TEAM	1	2	3	4	TOT
ND	7	28	0	14	49
PUR	0	0	3	7	10

TEAM	TOT	PASS	RUSH	TO
ND	444	267	177	1
PUR	218	178	40	1

ADVANCED ANALYTICS

METRIC	ND	PUR
Plays / drives	58 / –	68 / –
Sacks / TFL / INT	5 / 8 / 0	0 / 0 / 1
1st downs - TO	19 · 1	16 · 1

GAME LEADERS

PLAYER	LINE
CJ Carr	14/22, 237 pass, 3 TD/1 INT
Aneyas Williams	14 rush, 80 yds, 1 TD
Micah Gilbert	2 rec, 83 yds, 1 TD
Jordan Faison	4 rec, 66 yds

GAME RECAP

ND won 49-10 at Purdue on Sep 26, 2026 in Week 4, in a blowout. ND scored 7-28-0-14 by quarter (49 total) while PUR answered 0-0-3-7 (10). Offensively, ND rolled up 444 total yards (267 pass / 177 rush) with 1 turnover while visiting PUR.

ND drew first blood when c.Carr hit M.Gilbert for a touchdown. From there, ND scored on a 22-yard run, ND scored on a 1-yard run, and PUR reached the end zone. ND pulled away for a 49-10 final.

CJ Carr went 14/22, 237 pass yds, 3 TD / 1 INT, 10 rush. Aneyas Williams went 14 rush att, 80 yds, 1 TD, 1/6 rec. Williams now has 4 rushing TDs on the season. Carr now has 2 rushing TDs and 9 passing TDs on the season. The 49-point output was well above its season scoring pace (entering at 40.0 PPG); the offense now ranks 2 of 4 in FBS Independents scoring (42.3 PPG).

SHINING STARS

CJ Carr – 14/22, 237 pass yds, 3 TD, 1 INT · PFF pass 70.5 · PFF offense 75.0

Bryce Young – 2 sacks, 2 TFL · PFF defense 79.4

Armel Mukam – 1 sack, 1 TFL · PFF defense 75.7

Loghan Thomas – 1 sack, 1 TFL · PFF defense 72.1

PFF COVERAGE

McKinney: 35 coverage snaps, 75.3 grade vs PUR

Moore: 35 coverage snaps, 70.3 grade vs PUR

Shuler: 35 coverage snaps, 69.6 grade vs PUR

ON FILM THIS WEEK

Fix on film: 1 turnover (Carr INT) – protect the football in the install.

Fix on film: Williams graded 11.7 in pass block – pass-pro timing and line fits have to tighten this week.

Fix on film: Lambert graded 25.3 in pass block – pass-pro timing and line fits have to tighten this week.

Pro Football Focus graded the tape well on Hughes (defense 94.0), Sevillano (defense 93.0), and Asa (defense 90.6) – keep that rhythm in the install.

SCORING SUMMARY

QRT	TIME	TEAM	PLAY
Q1	4:09	ND	C.Carr hit M.Gilbert for a touchdown
Q2	14:56	ND	ND scored on a 22-yard run
Q2	5:47	ND	ND scored on a 1-yard run
Q2	4:15	PUR	PUR reached the end zone
Q2	0:29	ND	C.Carr hit N.James for a touchdown
Q3	4:10	PUR	PUR added a field goal
Q4	13:32	ND	C.Carr hit C.Flanagan for a touchdown
Q4	4:05	ND	N.Grubbs hit M.Jeffery for a touchdown

UNC LAST OUTING – WEEK 3 (SEP 19, 2026)

L 20-28 at CLE

TEAM	1	2	3	4	TOT
UNC	14	3	0	3	20
CLE	3	3	9	13	28

TEAM	TOT	PASS	RUSH	TO
UNC	349	135	214	2
CLE	401	215	186	2

ADVANCED ANALYTICS

METRIC	UNC	CLE
Plays / drives	69 / –	66 / –
Sacks / TFL / INT	3 / 6 / 1	3 / 5 / 1
1st downs - TO	20 · 2	20 · 2

GAME LEADERS

PLAYER	LINE
Billy Edwards	13/30, 135 pass, 1 TD/1 INT
Benjamin Hall	18 rush, 130 yds
Jordan Shipp	6 rec, 68 yds
Demon June	12 rush, 57 yds, 1 TD

GAME RECAP

UNC lost 20-28 at Clemson on Sep 19, 2026 in Week 3, in a competitive game. UNC scored 14-3-0-3 by quarter (20 total) while CLE answered 3-3-9-13 (28). Offensively, UNC rolled up 349 total yards (135 pass / 214 rush) with 2 turnovers while visiting CLE.

UNC drew first blood when uUNC scored on a 3-yard run. From there, CLE added a field goal, UNC reached the end zone, and UNC added a field goal. CLE held on for a 28-20 win.

Billy Edwards went 13/30, 135 pass yds, 1 TD / 1 INT, 14 rush. Benjamin Hall posted 18 rush att, 130 yds, 1/15 rec. Hall now has 2 receiving TDs on the season. Edwards now has 3 passing TDs on the season. The 20-point output was below its season scoring pace (entering at 25.5 PPG); the offense now ranks 9 of 13 in Big Sky scoring (26.0 PPG).

SHINING STARS

Xavier Lewis – 2 sacks, 2 TFL · PFF defense 74.3

Leroy Jackson – 1 sack, 1 TFL · PFF defense 74.8

Benjamin Hall – 18 rush, 130 yds · PFF pass block 78.5

Greg Smith – 1 TFL, 1 INT · PFF defense 90.0

PFF COVERAGE

Bryson: 38 coverage snaps, 55.0 grade vs CLE

Smith: 37 coverage snaps, 91.8 grade vs CLE

McDonald: 36 coverage snaps, 68.0 grade vs CLE

ON FILM THIS WEEK

Fix on film: 2 giveaways – ball security moves to the top of the script.

Fix on film: Patterson graded 33.6 in coverage – eye discipline and spacing are the back-end fix.

Fix on film: Hall graded 34.4 in pass block – pass-pro timing and line fits have to tighten this week.

Pro Football Focus graded the tape well on Smith (defense 90.0), Hall (pass block 78.5), and Cost (defense 76.8) – keep that rhythm in the install.

SCORING SUMMARY

QRT	TIME	TEAM	PLAY
Q1	10:50	UNC	UNC scored on a 3-yard run
Q1	6:55	CLE	CLE added a field goal
Q1	2:05	UNC	UNC reached the end zone
Q2	8:36	UNC	UNC added a field goal
Q2	0:02	CLE	CLE added a field goal
Q3	10:42	CLE	CLE added a field goal
Q3	4:21	CLE	Reynolds hit Bentancur for a 27-yard touchdown
Q4	6:34	UNC	UNC added a field goal



ND TEAM IDENTITY

Notre Dame

QB1: CJ Carr · 2026 4-0

2026: 42.2 PPG / 8.2 PAPG · Off 67.9 · Def 72.2

THE TWO-WAY STANDARD

Notre Dame is **4-0** in 2026 and has outscored four opponents **169-33**, that is a **42.2** PPG offense running alongside an **8.2** PAPG defense. Marcus Freeman sits **47-12** at the school including this season, and the identity is a team that can beat you either side of the ball.

FRONT FIRST, TAKEAWAYS LAST

The 2026 defense is built on pressure: a **75.8** PFF pass-rush grade, **10** sacks and **25** TFL against only **1** interception. Pittsburgh transfer Francis Brewu (**74.8** defense grade) and Boubacar Traore (**76.5** pass rush) are the front's connective tissue.

THE BACK END IS THE QUESTION

Notre Dame's **66.6** coverage grade is the lowest of the unit's three phases in the 2026 sample. Adon Shuler (**71.0** defense grade) and Jaiden Ausberry (**70.1**) carry the secondary into Chapel Hill.

BALANCED BY DESIGN

CJ Carr runs the show on an **86.0** offense grade across **409** snaps, and the 2026 attack is two-pronged: **1,100** pass yards and **10** pass TD against **567** rush yards and **9** rush TD. The scoring arrives from either direction.

THE CLEANEST TEAM IN THE COUNTRY

Notre Dame has been flagged just **10** times for **106** yards in 2026, **2.5** penalties per game, the second-fewest of **207** teams. It is the quiet edge that keeps the offense on schedule while North Carolina has already piled up **36** flags for **307** yards.

2026 SEASON BOARD

MARK	VALUE
Pass yds	1100 · #84/293
Rush yds	567 · #174/293
PPG	42.2
3rd down	22/78 (28.2%) · #161/293
RZ TD%	14/18 (77.8%) · #50/293
PFF Off / Pass / Run	67.9 · 71.5 · 63.3
PFF PB / Route	81.6 · 61.8
MARK	VALUE
PAPG	8.2
Sacks / INT	10 · 1 · Rk 42/293
PFF Def / PR / RD	72.2 · 75.8 · 69.8

2025 PRIOR-SEASON PROFILE

MARK	VALUE
Pass yds	3061 · #88/314
Rush yds	2453 · #57/314
PPG	42.0 · #4/314
3rd down	77/169 (45.6%) · #19/314
RZ TD%	39/53 (73.6%) · #32/314
PFF Off / Pass / Run	67.9 · 71.5 · 63.3
PFF PB / Route	81.6 · 61.8
MARK	VALUE
PAPG	17.6 · #14/314
Sacks / INT	34 · 21 · Rk 25/314
PFF Def / PR / RD	72.2 · 75.8 · 69.8

SPECIAL TEAMS

MARK	VALUE
FG	Noah Burnette 5/6 (83.3%)
Punt net / In20	James Rendell 43.3 · In20 13
KR / PR YPA	37.8 · 10.3

2025 BY MONTH (PPG / PAPG)

MONTH	PPG / PAPG	G
Aug	24.0 / 27.0	16
Sep	50.7 / 28.0	36
Oct	32.7 / 12.7	36
Nov	46.0 / 12.4	56

UNC TEAM IDENTITY

North Carolina

QB1: Billy Edwards · 2026 2-3

2026: 26.0 PPG / 19.9 PAPG · Off 63.4 · Def 74.9

A BELICHICK PROGRAM IN YEAR TWO

Bill Belichick is back for a second season in Chapel Hill after a **4-8** debut, with the 2026 team at **2-3** and **26.0** points per game. UNC returned only **45** players and added **55** newcomers, so this is a roster shaped on his watch.

THE PORTAL IS THE OFFENSE

The skill core is imported: QB Billy Edwards (Wisconsin), TE Jelani Thurman (Ohio State), WR Trech Kekahuna (Wisconsin) and RB Kaleb Jackson (LSU). The 2026 offense grades **63.4**, the weaker half of this team by PFF.

THIRD DOWN IS THE LEAK

UNC converts just **26.9%** on third down and turns **57.1%** of its red-zone trips into touchdowns. A **26.0**-point offense is leaning on its defense to hold margins.

THE DEFENSE IS THE BETTER HALF

UNC's 2026 team PFF reads defense **74.9** against offense **63.4**, with tackle Leroy Jackson at **79.4** run-defense and end Xavier Lewis at **81.1** overall. The front is where this team grades best.

GRADED PRESSURE, THIN HAVOC

The 2026 sample shows only **6** sacks, **3** interceptions and **22** tackles for loss. Jonathan Agumadu (**68.0** pass-rush) and Jaylen Harvey (**70.1**) carry pressure grades, but the takeaway totals lag the unit's marks.

2026 SEASON BOARD

MARK	VALUE
Pass yds	1144 · #68/293
Rush yds	828 · #70/293
PPG	26.0
3rd down	39/145 (26.9%) · #184/293
RZ TD%	12/21 (57.1%) · #159/293
PFF Off / Pass / Run	63.4 · 62.1 · 69.8
PFF PB / Route	61.0 · 63.7
MARK	VALUE
PAPG	19.9
Sacks / INT	6 · 3 · Rk 129/293
PFF Def / PR / RD	74.9 · 73.0 · 73.4

2025 PRIOR-SEASON PROFILE

MARK	VALUE
Pass yds	5012 · #11/314
Rush yds	2760 · #34/314
PPG	19.8 · #207/314
3rd down	76/221 (34.4%) · #177/314
RZ TD%	19/34 (55.9%) · #184/314
PFF Off / Pass / Run	63.4 · 62.1 · 69.8
PFF PB / Route	61.0 · 63.7
MARK	VALUE
PAPG	26.5 · #136/314
Sacks / INT	32 · 15 · Rk 33/314
PFF Def / PR / RD	74.9 · 73.0 · 73.4

SPECIAL TEAMS

MARK	VALUE
FG	Rece Verhoff 19/23 (82.6%)
Punt net / In20	Leo Blumentritt 40.1 · In20 23
KR / PR YPA	19.5 · 7.2

2025 BY MONTH (PPG / PAPG)

MONTH	PPG / PAPG	G
Aug	17.0 / 3.0	16
Sep	20.3 / 23.1	86
Oct	24.4 / 26.6	76
Nov	15.5 / 32.6	86

2025 TEAM IDENTITY – UNIT VS UNIT

ND vs UNC – same prior-season grain on every row

METRIC	ND	UNC
Record	10-2	4-8
PPG	42.0 · #4/314	19.8 · #207/314
PAPG (low better)	17.6 · #14/314	26.5 · #136/314
Pass yds	3061 · #88/314	5012 · #11/314
Rush yds	2453 · #57/314	2760 · #34/314
3rd down	77/169 (45.6%) · #19/314	76/221 (34.4%) · #177/314
RZ TD%	39/53 (73.6%) · #32/314	19/34 (55.9%) · #184/314
PFF Off / Def	67.9 · 72.2 · OVR 75.5	63.4 · 74.9 · OVR 72.9
PFF Pass / Run / PB	71.5 · 63.3 · 81.6	62.1 · 69.8 · 61.0
FG%	83.3% (5/6) · Noah Burnette	82.6% (19/23) · Rece Verhoff

Notre Dame @ North Carolina – 2026-10-03 · Week 1

POLLS

TEAM	CLASS	AP RANK	AP PTS	AP 1ST	COACHES RANK	COACHES PTS
ND	FBS	3	1531	1	3	1639
UNC	FBS	NR	—	—	NR	—

ADVANCED RATINGS

TEAM	CLASS	SP+ RANK	SP+ RATING	FPI RANK	FPI RATING
ND	FBS	3	28.1	3	27.8
UNC	FBS	56	3.9	42	7.1

ND · NOTRE DAME

NO. 3, AND PROTECTING IT

Notre Dame sits **No. 3** in both polls — **1,531** AP points with one first-place vote and **1,639** Coaches points — squarely in the CFP bye hunt. A loss at unranked North Carolina is the kind of ballot scar the Irish have spent a season trying to erase.

TWO BOARDS, ONE VERDICT

SP+ rates Notre Dame **No. 3** in the country (**28.1**) and FPI agrees at **No. 3 (27.8)**. Chris Ash's defense grades SP+ **No. 2 (12.7)** and Mike Denbrock's offense **No. 4 (40.5)** — top-five on both sides of the ball.

12-0 AND AN 80.3% CFP TICKET

The 2026 preview sim projects Notre Dame a perfect **12-0** with an **80.3%** CFP probability and a **5.7%** national-title cut. That same model slotted North Carolina at **2-10**, which frames Saturday as paper mismatch and trap game at once.

UNBEATEN THROUGH SEPTEMBER

Marcus Freeman's Irish are **4-0** for the first time in his tenure, outscoring opponents **169-33** and carrying a **14**-game win streak into Chapel Hill. Freeman is **58-13** at Notre Dame in his sixth season.

A BACKFIELD REBUILT FROM SCRATCH

Doak Walker winner Jeremiyah Love and Jadarian Price both left as Round 1 NFL picks, and the Irish took a net **-54.22** talent churn (seven portal adds, **14** exits). Nolan James has answered with **242** total yards and **4** TDs.

CARR'S NEXT STEP

CJ Carr has **729** total yards and **7** TDs in 2026, lifting his career regular-season line to **726** pass yards and **6** pass TDs. He's the program's first returning starting quarterback since Ian Book.

FIVE-STARS COMING, ONE LEAVING

Notre Dame's 2026 class ranks **No. 5** nationally (**299.28** points) with four five-star signees — EDGE Rodney Dunham (**No. 7** overall), TE Ian Premer (**No. 21**), CB Khary Adams (**No. 24**) and S Joey O'Brien (**No. 28**). Ohio State transfer WR Quincy Porter is out for the season (knee), and QB Blake Hebert is questionable.

UNC · NORTH CAROLINA

ZERO VOTES, ONE CHANCE

North Carolina is unranked in both the AP and Coaches polls and has drawn no AP votes since a **28-20** loss at Clemson. A win over **No. 3** Notre Dame is the single fastest route onto the ballot; the Heels got two Coaches votes after beating TCU but never touched the AP version.

THE GAP ON PAPER

SP+ puts North Carolina **No. 56 (3.9)** against Notre Dame's **No. 3 (28.1)**, and FPI has it **No. 42 (7.1)** versus the Irish's **No. 3 (27.8)**. The SP+ defense — **No. 34 (21.2)** — is the unit that keeps Belichick's club in games.

THE SIM SAID 2-10

The 2026 preview projected North Carolina **2-10 (0-8 ACC)** with a **0.0%** CFP probability. Belichick's club is already **2-1** and **0-1** in ACC play, two games ahead of that pace entering the biggest measuring stick of his college tenure.

TWENTY IN, TWENTY-NINE OUT

Year two under Belichick flipped **20** portal arrivals against **29** departures — a net **-50.05** talent churn and the **No. 103** FBS portal class. Notre Dame's counter is seven adds, all four-star, against **14** exits.

PETRINO'S POWER SPREAD

Bobby Petrino arrives from Arkansas, whose offense ranked 19th nationally, to install a power spread around QB Billy Edwards Jr. (**618** total yards, **3** TDs). Marcus Freeman's scouting note: 'They start fast. They're really good on the first drive.'

THURMAN'S TARGET LOAD

Ohio State transfer TE Jelani Thurman is the focal point — Freeman said he's 'gotten over **30%** of the targets.' He headlines a tight-end room rebuilt almost entirely through the portal.

THE FRONT IS THE IDENTITY

UNC has **10** sacks through three games, six of them from Xavier Lewis, and surrenders just **3.4** yards per carry (**110** rush yards per game). The Heels rank 20th nationally at **13.7** points allowed and 33rd at **4.6** yards per play.

THE ROOM IS THINNING

Seven Tar Heels sit on the injury board as Out, including receivers C.J. Sadler, Keeyun Chapman and Carnell Warren plus tight ends Jordan Washington and Jaxxon Warren. That's a shorthanded pass-catching corps squaring off with a defense SP+ ranks **No. 2** in the country.



ND PASSING ATTACK	
Notre Dame	
QB1: CJ Carr · QB2: Noah Grubbs · SO 6-2" / 215 lbs	
2026 so far: 1100 pass yds / 10 TD · Rk 84/293 · 3rd 28.2% · RZ 77.8%	
MARK	VALUE
Pass yds / TD	1100 / 10 · #84/293
Rush complement	567 / 9 TD · #174/293
3rd down	22/78 (28.2%) · #161/293
RZ TD%	14/18 (77.8%) · #50/293
Team PFF Pass / PB / Route	71.5 · 81.6 · 61.8
PFF CJ Carr grade / Acc%	83.5 · 73.2% · ND
ADOT / TTT / YPA	10.6 · 2.55s · 9.2 · BTT 6.5% · TWP 3.2%

2026 PFF PASSERS					
PLAYER	GRD	ADOT	TWP%	P2S%	EPA
CJ Carr	83.5	10.6	3.2%	10.5%	0.4
Noah Grubbs	53.4	9.3	0.0%	—	0.1
Teddy Jarrard	62.6	4.5	0.0%	—	0.9

2026 PASSERS			
PLAYER	C/A	YDS	TD/INT
CJ Carr	53/73	726	6/0
CJ Carr	19/29	239	2/0
Noah Grubbs	7/11	78	0/0

2026 TOP TARGETS			
PLAYER	REC	YDS	TD
Micah Gilbert	13	251	1
Jordan Faison	13	173	2
Nolan James	7	73	1

2026 PFF ROUTES				
PLAYER	RTE	YPRR	ADOT	DROP%
Jordan Faison	74.9	3.1	11.3	11.1%
Micah Gilbert	62.7	1.9	13.7	0.0%
Nolan James	77.6	8.4	1.8	0.0%

QB CAREER				
YR	TM	C/A	YDS	TD/INT
2026	ND	53/73	726	6/0
2017	VT	0/0	—	0/0
2016	VT	0/0	—	0/0

THE SAMPLE SAYS STARTER
Through the 2026 sample CJ Carr is **53-of-73 (72.6%)** for **726** yards and **6** touchdowns on a **92.2** PFF passing grade — **9.9** yards per attempt, **83.6%** PFF accuracy and a **0.42** EPA per play at **2.41** seconds average time to throw. He protects the ball too: **1.2%** turnover-worthy-play rate across **76** dropbacks.

DOWNFIELD IS THE POINT
Carr's **9.7**-yard average depth of target pairs with a **7.7%** big-time-throw rate, and the 2026 offense earns its yards through the air — completed passes generate **+0.996** PPA versus **+0.024** on rushes, with **7.7%** of his throws charted as big-time. After Carr went **18-of-24** for **234** yards vs Michigan State (Sept. **20**, 2026), Marcus Freeman said, "He took advantage of what the team gave him in the pass game with explosive plays."

DRIVES END IN POINTS
Notre Dame has scored on **58.5%** of its **41** drives (**19** touchdowns) behind just **1** turnover drive, and on 3rd down the Irish have run **78** plays at **+0.296** PPA. UNC's defense-shaping counterpoint is its own offense: the Tar Heels scored on **38.7%** of **31** drives with **4** turnover drives.

FAISON SETS THE FUNNEL
Jordan Faison owns a **21.7%** target share and a **74.9** PFF route grade — **3.14** yards per route run, **11.3**-yard aDOT, **50%** contested-catch rate and **2** scores. Micah Gilbert works the intermediate tier opposite him at **17.0%** share and a **13.7**-yard aDOT (**62.7** route grade).

EXPLOSIVE OUTLETS
Jerome Bettis has turned just **2** targets into **61** yards on a **16.0**-yard aDOT (**78.4** route grade, **7.63** YPRR), while back Nolan James sits at **8.38** YPRR on a **77.6** route grade. The deepest and shortest explosives live in the same tree.

THE ROOM BEHIND CARR
Listed QB2 Noah Grubbs, a **4**-star true freshman out of Lake Mary, is **7-of-11 (63.6%)** for **78** yards on a **53.4** PFF passing grade at **1.99**-second time to throw. Blake Hebert carries a Questionable tag, thinning the depth behind the starter.

UNC PASSING ATTACK	
North Carolina	
QB1: Billy Edwards · QB2: Kenny Lueth · SR 6-3" / 228 lbs	
2026 so far: 1144 pass yds / 6 TD · Rk 68/293 · 3rd 26.9% · RZ 57.1%	
MARK	VALUE
Pass yds / TD	1144 / 6 · #68/293
Rush complement	828 / 8 TD · #70/293
3rd down	39/145 (26.9%) · #184/293
RZ TD%	12/21 (57.1%) · #159/293
Team PFF Pass / PB / Route	62.1 · 61.0 · 63.7
PFF Billy Edwards grade / Acc%	49.6 · 53.8% · WIS
ADOT / TTT / YPA	14.8 · 2.48s · 7.1 · BTT 0.0% · TWP 0.0%

2026 PFF PASSERS					
PLAYER	GRD	ADOT	TWP%	P2S%	EPA
Kenny Lueth	76.9	9.7	3.1%	29.0%	-0.0
Brayten Silbor	80.8	13.2	3.8%	6.7%	0.1
Billy Edwards	49.6	14.8	0.0%	0.0%	0.1

2026 PASSERS			
PLAYER	C/A	YDS	TD/INT
Kenny Lueth	61/99	729	4/3
Billy Edwards	44/78	611	3/1
Brayten Silbor	24/45	275	2/0

2026 TOP TARGETS			
PLAYER	REC	YDS	TD
Marcus Mozer	19	279	3
Trey Olsen	11	216	2
Jelani Thurman	11	183	1

2026 PFF ROUTES				
PLAYER	RTE	YPRR	ADOT	DROP%
Trey Olsen	58.8	1.7	19.9	33.3%
Marcus Mozer	61.0	1.6	13.4	20.0%
Garrett Harstad	63.3	1.5	7.8	0.0%

QB CAREER				
YR	TM	C/A	YDS	TD/INT
2026	UNC	44/78	611	3/1
2025	WIS	7/16	113	0/0
2024	UMD	273/420	2881	15/9
2023	UMD	6/20	126	1/1

EDWARDS HOLDS THE LISTED JOB
Billy Edwards is the listed 2026 QB1 and has thrown for **611** yards on **44-of-78 (56.4%)** with **3** TD and **1** INT, but his **59.9** PFF passing grade and **1.3%** big-time-throw rate are the lowest of the rotation. The Wisconsin transfer (**2,881** yards, **15** TD at Maryland in 2024) is the steady pocket operator of the pair.

LUETH'S GRADE SAYS OTHERWISE
Kenny Lueth carries the better 2026 passing grade (**76.9** vs **59.9**) on more work — **122** dropbacks, **727** yards, **4** TD to **3** INT — and adds **27** carries as a runner. His **2.58s** time to throw and **6.7%** big-time-throw rate are the more aggressive profile sitting behind Edwards.

WHOEVER THROWS IS UNDER SIEGE
The UNC pocket is leaking: Lueth has been sacked on **29.0%** of pressures and Edwards on **23.3%**, with Edwards absorbing **31** pressures (**7** sacks) and Lueth **25 (9** sacks). Sack avoidance is the swing skill that decides this room.

MOZER IS THE FUNNEL
Marcus Mozer is UNC's target leader in 2026 — **24** targets, **12** catches, **155** yards and **1** TD at a **61.0** route grade and **1.61** yards per route run. A **20.0%** drop rate is the tax on that volume.

THURMAN'S PER-ROUTE PAYOFF
Ohio State transfer TE Jelani Thurman owns the room's best route grade (**75.4**) and a **3.13** yards-per-route-run mark, catching **4** of **8** targets for **94** yards with zero drops across **30** routes. The sample is small, but no UNC pass catcher converts a route into yards faster.

SLOT STEADY, DEEP RISKY
Garrett Harstad works **88.0%** of his routes from the slot at a **0.0%** drop rate (**10** catches, **111** yards, **63.3** route grade) as the chain-mover. Trey Olsen supplies the opposite: a **19.9** aDOT and **2** TD on **174** yards at a **33.3%** drop cost.

2025 PASSING ATTACK – UNIT VS UNIT		
ND vs UNC — same prior-season grain on every row		
METRIC	ND	UNC
Pass yds / TD	3061 / 25 · Rk 88/314	5012 / 25 · Rk 11/314
3rd down	77/169 (45.6%) · #19/314	76/221 (34.4%) · #177/314
RZ TD%	39/53 (73.6%) · #32/314	19/34 (55.9%) · #184/314
Team PFF Pass	71.5	62.1
Team PFF PB / Route	81.6 · 61.8	61.0 · 63.7
QB1 Pass grade / Acc%	CJ Carr 83.5 · 73.2% · EPA 0.4	Billy Edward 49.6 · 53.8% · EPA 0.1
QB1 ADOT / TWP%	10.6 · 3.2% · TTT 2.55s	14.8 · 0.0% · TTT 2.48s



ND RUSHING ATTACK

Notre Dame

2026 Week 1 lead: Aneyas Williams JR

2026 so far: 567 yds / 9 TD · Rk 174/293

MARK	VALUE
Rush yds / TD	567 / 9 · #174/293
Pass complement	1100 / 10 TD · #84/293
Team PFF Run / RB	63.3 · 64.0

2026 RUSHERS			
PLAYER	ATT	YDS	TD
Nolan James	39	169	3
Aneyas Williams	38	144	3
Aneyas Williams	20	90	2
Jonaz Walton	9	47	0

2026 PFF RUN					
PLAYER	GRD	ELU	YAC/A	BRK%	ZN/GAP
Nolan James	78.3	74.7	3.4	18.9%	19/19
Aneyas Williams	67.2	54.4	3.2	11.1%	26/12
Jonaz Walton	70.3	48.1	4.3	31.9%	4/5

2026 TEAM RUSH DIRECTION				
LANE	ATT	YDS	YPC	TD
A-Gap Left	31	115	3.7	1
Right Guard	16	70	4.4	2
A-Gap Right	12	38	3.2	0
Left Guard	11	29	2.6	0
Right End / Perimeter	10	60	6.0	1
Left Tackle	9	24	2.7	3

2026 DIR – ANEYAS WILLIAMS				
LANE	ATT	YDS	YPC	TD
A-Gap Left	12	48	4.0	0
A-Gap Left	8	29	3.6	0
Right Guard	6	27	4.5	1
Right Guard	5	26	5.2	1
Left Tackle	3	8	2.7	1

TWO-BACK COMMITTEE, NO BELL COW

Notre Dame's 2026 carry split is nearly dead even: Nolan James (**39** att, **169** yds, **4.3** per carry, **3** TD) and Aneyas Williams (**38** att, **144** yds, **3.8** per carry, **3** TD). Neither back has separated into a true lead role.

NOLAN JAMES WINS THE TACKLE BATTLE

James owns the room's best PFF run grade at **78.3**, plus a **74.7** elusive rating, **3.44** yards after contact per attempt, an **18.9%** breakaway rate and **8** avoided tackles on **39** attempts.

ANEYAS WILLIAMS IS THE ZONE BACK

Williams has leaned zone: **26** zone attempts against **12** gap attempts, at a **67.2** PFF run grade and a **54.4** elusive rating. James is a dead-even **19-19** zone-to-gap by comparison.

JONAZ WALTON, THE HOME-RUN CHANGE-UP

On a thin **9**-attempt sample, Walton averages **5.2** yards per carry with a **31.9%** breakaway rate and **4.33** yards after contact per attempt, to go with a **70.3** PFF run grade.

WHERE THE IRISH RUN IT

Notre Dame's heaviest cut is A-Gap Left (**31** att, **3.7** per carry). Its best efficiency comes off the Right End (**10** att, **6.0** per carry), and Left Tackle fronts have produced **3** rush TD on **9** attempts.

UNC'S FRONT IS THE STIFFEST TEST

North Carolina's run defenders grade above ND's blockers: end Leroy Jackson **81.1** run-defense, tackle Xavier Lewis **78.4**, nose Isaiah Johnson **75.6**, linebacker Hudson Voggesser **74.0** (PFF). ND's line run-block grades top out at **66.4** (LT Anthonie Knapp) against a **64.0** team run-block mark.

UNC RUSHING ATTACK

North Carolina

2026 Week 1 lead: Demon June SO

2026 so far: 828 yds / 8 TD · Rk 70/293

MARK	VALUE
Rush yds / TD	828 / 8 · #70/293
Pass complement	1144 / 6 TD · #68/293
Team PFF Run / RB	69.8 · 52.6

2026 RUSHERS			
PLAYER	ATT	YDS	TD
Benjamin Hall	33	215	0
Justin Guin	41	189	2
Mathias Price	32	168	1
Kenny Lueth	42	145	2

2026 PFF RUN					
PLAYER	GRD	ELU	YAC/A	BRK%	ZN/GAP
Benjamin Hall	70.0	146.4	4.5	43.3%	17/16
Justin Guin	66.3	35.9	2.2	25.8%	17/24
Kenny Lueth	73.8	56.0	3.5	11.9%	3/2
Mathias Price	68.9	26.9	2.2	19.6%	13/19

2026 TEAM RUSH DIRECTION				
LANE	ATT	YDS	YPC	TD
Left End / Sweep	51	260	5.1	2
A-Gap Right	43	160	3.7	2
A-Gap Left	40	244	6.1	3
Right End / Perimeter	34	180	5.3	0
Left Tackle	22	96	4.4	2
Right Tackle	21	106	5.0	0

2026 DIR – DEMON JUNE				
LANE	ATT	YDS	YPC	TD
A-Gap Left	7	40	5.7	3
A-Gap Right	4	11	2.8	0
A-Gap Left	3	15	5.0	0
Right Guard	3	19	6.3	1
Left Guard	2	3	1.5	0

HALL IS THE VOLUME AND THE BURST

Benjamin Hall leads UNC with **215** rush yds on **33** carries (**6.5** avg) in the 2026 sample, pairing it with a **43.3** breakaway% and **9** explosive runs. His 2026 run grade is **70.0** with a **146.4** elusive rating, **4.52** yds after contact per attempt, and **11** missed tackles forced.

JUNE OWNS THE GOAL LINE

Demon June (SO, **225** lbs) has **4** rush TD on **25** carries (**115** yds, **4.6** avg), the 2026 team rushing-TD lead; his 2026 run grade is **71.3** and offense grade **70.4**. His 2025 line: **464** yds on **84** carries (**5.5** avg), **2** TD.

A FIVE-BACK COMMITTEE, ONE WORKHORSE SHORT

Five UNC backs logged **25**-plus carries in the 2026 sample and none cleared **215** rush yds. Justin Guin owns the room's heaviest load (**41** att, **189** yds, **2** TD); Mathias Price adds **168** yds on **32** carries. LSU transfer Kaleb Jackson (**6-0**, **240**) joins the rotation.

THE MONEY LANE IS MIDDLE LEFT

UNC's 2026 run game pays best attacking Middle Left: **40** carries, **244** yds (**6.1** avg) and a team-best **11** explosive runs. Middle Right is the laggard at **3.7** avg on **43** carries.

THE FRONT SETS IT WITH STRICKLAND AND KELLY

UNC's top run-block grades sit up front: T Montrey Strickland at **76.0** (**115** run-block snaps) and C Christo Kelly at **74.1** (**76** snaps). Ohio State transfer TE Jelani Thurman adds a **77.0** run-block mark on **70** snaps.

NOTRE DAME'S FRONT IS THE REAL TEST

Notre Dame carries a 2026 regular-season run-defense grade of **91.3**. The Irish front added transfers Tionne Gray (Oregon) and Keon Keeley (Alabama) this cycle.

2025 RUSHING ATTACK – UNIT VS UNIT

ND vs UNC – same prior-season grain on every row		
METRIC	ND	UNC
Rush yds / TD	2453 / 38 · Rk 57/314	2760 / 28 · Rk 34/314
Pass complement	3061 pass yds · Rk 88	5012 pass yds · Rk 11
Team PFF Run / RB	63.3 · 64.0	69.8 · 52.6
Lead rusher volume	Nolan James 169/3 · 39 att	Benjamin Hall 215/0 · 33 att
RB1 PFF / Elusive	Aneyas Willi 67.2 · 54.4 · YAC/A 3.2	Demon June 71.3 · 40.3 · YAC/A 3.4
RB1 Zone / Gap att	26 / 12 · A-Gap Left	16 / 9 · Left End / Sweep



ND RECEIVING ATTACK

Notre Dame

WR1 volume: Micah Gilbert

2026 so far: 1100 pass yds / 10 TD · route 61.8

MARK	VALUE
Pass yds / TD	1100 / 10 · #84/293
Team PFF Route / Pass	61.8 · 71.5

2026 TOP TARGETS

PLAYER	REC	YDS	TD
Micah Gilbert	13	251	1
Jordan Faison	13	173	2
Nolan James	7	73	1
Jerome Bettis	2	61	0

2026 PFF ROUTES

PLAYER	RTE	YPRR	ADOT	SLOT%	DROP%	RTS
Jordan Faison	74.9	3.1	11.3	15.6%	11.1%	43
Micah Gilbert	62.7	1.9	13.7	20.5%	0.0%	42
Nolan James	73.7	5.5	0.4	0.0%	0.0%	12

GILBERT IS THE ALPHA, AND THE DEPTH OF TARGET PROVES IT

Micah Gilbert leads Notre Dame with **13** catches, **251** yards and **1** TD (2026), on a team-high **18** targets. The PFF route grade is **69.7**, the average depth of target **15.5** yards, and he has run **86** routes at **3.88** yards per route run with zero drops.

FAISON IS THE CONTESTED-CATCH WINNER

Jordan Faison: **13** catches, **173** yards, **2** TD (2026). PFF route grade **70.7**. **2.63** yards per route run, and a **50.0%** contested-catch rate across **23** targets and **91** routes.

PORTER'S KNEE THINS THE BUCKEYE PIPELINE

Quincy Porter, a **4**-star transfer from Ohio State, is out with a knee injury and expected to miss the remainder of the season. Fellow Ohio State transfer Mylan Graham is active but has just **3** catches for **32** yards (2026).

ROUTE GRADE: ND'S RECEIVING UNIT SEPARATES

Notre Dame carries a **76.3** PFF team route grade (2026 regular season); North Carolina sits at **66.2**. The Irish team passing grade is **91.6** against the Tar Heels' **60.2**.

UNC'S ROOM RUNS THROUGH THE TIGHT END NOW

Jelani Thurman, an Ohio State transfer, leads North Carolina with **11** catches, **183** yards and **1** TD (2026). PFF route grade **72.4** and **2.32** yards per route run on **18** targets. The WR corps is shorthanded: CJ Sadler, Carnell Warren and Keeyun Chapman are all listed out.

SHIPP IS THE HEALTHIEST OUTSIDE OPTION

Jordan Shipp is North Carolina's top available wideout: **13** catches for **164** yards (2026), PFF route grade **70.1**, **1.84** yards per route run with a **13.1**-yard average depth of target on **18** targets.

KEKAHUNA OWNS THE SLOT FOR THE TAR HEELS

Trech Kekahuna, a Wisconsin transfer, lines up in the slot on **89.0%** of his snaps (2026). He has **6** catches for **71** yards and a **60.1** PFF route grade.

UNC RECEIVING ATTACK

North Carolina

WR1 volume: Marcus Mozer

2026 so far: 1144 pass yds / 6 TD · route 63.7

MARK	VALUE
Pass yds / TD	1144 / 6 · #68/293
Team PFF Route / Pass	63.7 · 62.1

2026 TOP TARGETS

PLAYER	REC	YDS	TD
Marcus Mozer	19	279	3
Trey Olsen	11	216	2
Jelani Thurman	11	183	1
Garrett Harstad	16	179	0

2026 PFF ROUTES

PLAYER	RTE	YPRR	ADOT	SLOT%	DROP%	RTS
Trey Olsen	58.8	1.7	19.9	8.1%	33.3%	105
Marcus Mozer	61.0	1.6	13.4	5.9%	20.0%	96
Garrett Harstad	63.3	1.5	7.8	88.0%	0.0%	76
Evan Morris	48.2	0.8	8.5	60.0%	27.3%	72

SHIPP IS THE HEADLINER WHO STAYED

Jordan Shipp returns as WR1 and UNC's leading holdover pass-catcher, with **13** catches for **164** yards in 2026. He posted **54** receptions, **574** yards and **6** TDs in 2025, and carries a **70.8** PFF route grade on **89** routes this season.

THURMAN IS THE OHIO STATE TRANSPLANT WHO LIFTS THE TIGHT END SPOT

Jelani Thurman, in from Ohio State, has **11** catches for **183** yards and a TD on **18** targets in 2026, at **2.32** yards per route run. His PFF route grade of **83.8** sits atop the Tar Heel receiving group.

MOZER IS THE VOLUME KING

Marcus Mozer leads UNC with **25** of the team's **171** targets, a **14.6%** share, and paces the room at **19** catches, **279** yards and **3** TDs in 2026. PFF route grade: **61.0** across **96** routes.

OLSEN IS THE VERTICAL SHOT, AND A BOOM-OR-BUST ONE

Trey Olsen works a **19.9**-yard average depth of target in 2026, which has produced **8** catches for **174** yards and **2** TDs on **15** targets. The trade-off is a **33.3%** drop rate on those targets.

THE SLOT IS A TWO-MAN OPERATION

Garrett Harstad lives in the slot at an **88.0%** rate in 2026, with **10** catches for **111** yards and a **0.0%** drop rate on **12** targets. Wisconsin transfer Trech Kekahuna is an **89.0%** slot body with **6** grabs for **71** yards.

INJURIES HAVE STRIPPED THE ROOM'S DEPTH

UNC has listed receivers Carnell Warren, Keeyun Chapman and C.J. Sadler plus tight ends Jordan Washington and Jaxxon Warren all out. That removes five pass-catchers from a room already rebuilt on portal arrivals.

2025 RECEIVING – UNIT VS UNIT

ND vs UNC — same prior-season grain on every row

METRIC	ND	UNC
Pass yds / TD	3061 / 25 · Rk 88/314	5012 / 25 · Rk 11/314
Team PFF Route / Pass	61.8 · 71.5	63.7 · 62.1
WR1 volume	Micah Gilbert 13/251/1 · REC/YDS/TD	Marcus Mozer 19/279/3 · REC/YDS/TD
WR1 Route / YPRR / ADOT	Jordan Faiso 74.9 · 3.1 · 11.3 · Drop 11.1%	Trey Olsen 58.8 · 1.7 · 19.9 · Drop 33.3%
WR1 Slot% / Routes	15.6% · 43	8.1% · 105



ND TRENCHES + ST

Notre Dame
PB 81.6 · RB 64.0 · Def 72.2

MARK	VALUE
Team PB / RB	81.6 · 64.0
OL sacks / pressures allowed	0 · 1
DL sacks / pressures	3 · 15

2026 OL PFF

PLAYER	POS	PB	RB	PR-ALL
Joe Otting	C	81.5	55.5	0
Ashton Craig	C	80.2	59.1	1
Aneyas Williams	HB	80.1	60.0	0
Nolan James	HB	76.8	60.0	0
Jonaz Walton	HB	74.8	—	0

2026 DL PFF

PLAYER	POS	DEF	SACK	PR
Boubacar Traore	ED	73.6	2	9
Bryce Young	ED	71.5	1	6

2025 SPECIAL TEAMS

MARK	VALUE
FG	Noah Burnette 5/6 (83.3%)
Punt net / In20	James Rendell 43.3 · In20 13
KO TB	Erik Schmidt 54
KR / PR YPA	37.8 · 10.3 (Jadarian Price/Jordan Faison)

PASS-PRO FIRST FOR THE IRISH FRONT

Notre Dame's line grades **81.6** in pass protection against **64.0** in run blocking (2026). Center Ashton Craig holds an **80.2** pass-block grade, and Joe Otting adds **81.5**.

PORTAL-BUILT FRONT

Pittsburgh transfer Francis Brewu anchors the interior at **84.8** overall and **84.7** as a pass rusher (2026), with **1** sack and **6** pressures. Boubacar Traore (**81.7** pass-rush, **9** pressures) and Bryce Young (**3** tackles for loss) work the edges.

TAR HEELS PASS-PRO LEAK

UNC's line grades **63.8** in pass protection on the 2026 regular season. Right tackle Zion Sauvao has allowed **2** sacks and **7** pressures, and Montrey Strickland has surrendered **10** pressures.

LEWIS POWERS THE INTERIOR, MINUS ABOU JAOUDE

Xavier Lewis leads the Tar Heels front with an **83.6** overall grade, **5** sacks and **14** pressures (2026). Edge Melkart Abou Jaoude, a **79.8** overall grade, is OUT on the injury report.

SPECIALISTS RESET

Kicker Spencer Porath is **5-of-6** on field goals with a **76.4** PFF grade (2026). Punter Jasper Scaife averages **45.9** yards, and Jordan Faison handles punt returns (**5** for **70**).

FLAGS FLY IN CHAPEL HILL

Penalty discipline splits sharply in 2026: Notre Dame has been flagged **10** times for **106** yards, UNC **36** times for **307**.

UNC TRENCHES + ST

North Carolina
PB 61.0 · RB 52.6 · Def 74.9

MARK	VALUE
Team PB / RB	61.0 · 52.6
OL sacks / pressures allowed	0 · 3
DL sacks / pressures	11 · 63

2026 OL PFF

PLAYER	POS	PB	RB	PR-ALL
Lincoln Faapouli	G	82.2	50.8	0
Benjamin Hall	HB	81.8	60.0	0
Jack Ziebell	C	77.4	56.9	0
Brandon Homady	G	77.2	71.0	0
Kieryus Boone	HB	76.3	59.4	0

2026 DL PFF

PLAYER	POS	DEF	SACK	PR
Dominic Butts	ED	77.3	1	16
Xavier Lewis	DI	83.6	5	14
Blake Weslin	ED	59.8	0	9
Jaylen Harvey	ED	74.1	2	9
Ezra Ekuban	ED	71.3	2	8

2025 SPECIAL TEAMS

MARK	VALUE
FG	Rece Verhoff 19/23 (82.6%)
Punt net / In20	Leo Blumentritt 40.1 · In20 23
KO TB	Rece Verhoff 39
KR / PR YPA	19.5 · 7.2 (Luke Wooten/Javarius Green)

LEWIS IS THE INTERIOR WRECKING BALL

Xavier Lewis owns UNC's top-graded trench defender line. The defensive tackle posts an **83.6** defense grade and **83.1** pass-rush mark with **5** sacks and **14** pressures on **146** snaps (2026).

BUTTS SETS THE EDGE, HARVEY ADDS THE PUNCH

Dominic Butts leads the rotation with **16** pressures and **6** tackles for loss (**77.3** defense, **77.8** pass rush, **159** snaps). Penn State transfer Jaylen Harvey added **2** sacks and **9** pressures, while Melkart Abou Jaoude is Out (undisclosed) and off the edge rotation (2026).

A PASS-FIRST OFFENSIVE LINE

UNC's starting five blocks better in protection than in the run game. Left guard Levi Johnson carries a **75.0** pass-block grade, and right tackle Montrey Strickland leads the front at **76.0** run block despite **10** pressures allowed. Right guard Andrias Guillory trails the group at **52.2** pass / **45.8** run (2026).

NOTRE DAME'S PORTAL INTERIOR

The Irish rebuilt inside through the transfer portal. Pittsburgh transfer Francis Brewu grades **84.8** defense and **84.7** pass rush, and Boubacar Traore adds an **81.7** pass-rush grade with **2** sacks and **9** pressures (2026).

KNAPP ANCHORS THE IRISH FIVE

Anthonie Knapp logged the most 2026 offensive-line snaps at **122** (**72.6** offense grade). Guerby Lambert owns the line's best pass-block grade at **75.6**, with Ashton Craig close behind at **73.5** on **81** snaps.

NEW KICKER, SAME RETURN THREAT

With Rece Verhoff Out (undisclosed), Aeron Burrell takes over UNC's kicking at **4/6** on field goals and **3/3** on extra points (2026). Notre Dame counters with Spencer Porath (**5/6** FG), and returner Jordan Faison has **5** punt returns for **70** yards.

2025 TRENCHES & ST – UNIT VS UNIT

ND vs UNC – same prior-season grain on every row

METRIC	ND	UNC
Team PB / RB	81.6 · 64.0	61.0 · 52.6
Sack / pressure allowed	4.0 sacks · 21 pressures	3.0 sacks · 31 pressures
OL1 PB / RB	Joe Otting 81.5 · 55.5 · C	Lincoln Faap 82.2 · 50.8 · G
DL1 Def / Sacks / PR	Boubacar Tra 73.6 · 2 · 9 · ED	Dominic Butt 77.3 · 1 · 16 · ED
FG%	Noah Burnette 5/6 (83.3%)	Rece Verhoff 19/23 (82.6%)
Punt net / In20	43.3 · 13 · James Rendell	40.1 · 23 · Leo Blumentritt



ND SECONDARY

Notre Dame
2026 so far: Def 72.2 · INT 1 · Sacks 10

MARK	VALUE
Team Def PFF	72.2
INT / Sacks	1 · 10 · #205/293
Cov grade / FI%	66.6 · 30.9% · snap-wtd FI%

2026 SECONDARY PFF

PLAYER	POS	DEF	COV	INT/PBU
Adon Shuler	S	76.9	75.6	1/0
Drayk Bowen	LB	71.0	63.1	0/0
Leonard Moore	CB	80.3	77.7	0/2
Luke Talich	S	78.4	69.4	1/0
Jaylen Sneed	LB	72.4	71.3	0/0

2026 COVERAGE

PLAYER	COV	FI%	Y/CS	QB-RTG
Adon Shuler	72.6	100.0%	0.0	39.6
Leonard Moore	74.1	20.0%	0.4	48.8
Drayk Bowen	60.5	0.0%	1.1	86.8
Luke Talich	54.9	0.0%	1.6	106.7

MOORE ISLAND

CB1 Leonard Moore carries an **80.3** overall defense grade and **77.7** coverage grade in 2026, holding passers to a **42.4** rating against with **2** pass breakups on **120** snaps. He is the graded anchor of the Irish corner rotation.

IRISH BALL-HAWKS

FS Adon Shuler (**76.9** grade, **1** interception, **56.3** passer rating against, **100.0%** forced-incompletion rate on **42** coverage snaps) and nickel DJ McKinney, in from Colorado (**72.7** grade, **1** interception, **20.8** passer rating against, **50.0%** forced-incompletion rate on **27** coverage snaps), give ND two takeaway threats on the back end.

THE GRAY AREA

CB2 Christian Gray is the coverage question opposite Moore: **55.9** overall grade, **49.4** coverage grade, **64.1** passer rating against, and **1** pass breakup on **89** snaps.

TAR HEEL COVERAGE GRADES

UNC answers with SS Greg Smith (**84.9** coverage grade, **2** interceptions), CB Kaleb Quammie (**79.4** coverage grade), and slot Kaleb Cost (**74.4** grade, **1** pass breakup, **30** yards allowed on **6** targets).

IRISH ROUTE RUNNERS

Micah Gilbert (**334** receiving yards, **69.7** route grade, **15.5** aDOT, **4.03** yards per route) and Jordan Faison (**239** yards, **70.7** route grade, **21.7%** target share on **23** targets) front the ND tree; Jerome Bettis Jr. is the deep shot at **87** yards and a **21.3** aDOT on **4** targets.

UNC SECONDARY

North Carolina
2026 so far: Def 74.9 · INT 3 · Sacks 6

MARK	VALUE
Team Def PFF	74.9
INT / Sacks	3 · 6 · #89/293
Cov grade / FI%	69.3 · 9.7% · snap-wtd FI%

2026 SECONDARY PFF

PLAYER	POS	DEF	COV	INT/PBU
Franky Morales	S	65.6	70.0	1/0
Hudson Voggesser	LB	74.3	68.3	0/1
Cadence Turner	CB	87.3	88.3	1/2
Kaleb Quammie	CB	63.9	59.5	0/1
Greg Smith	S	89.2	90.3	2/1

2026 COVERAGE

PLAYER	COV	FI%	Y/CS	QB-RTG
Greg Smith	75.8	33.3%	0.0	0.0
Jaiden Patterson	67.6	20.0%	0.5	75.4
Derek McDonald	58.6	0.0%	0.6	79.7
Franky Morales	69.5	0.0%	0.7	6.5

TURNER ISLAND: CB1 BY GRADE

Cadence Turner carries an **88.3** coverage grade and **87.3** overall defense grade across **204** snaps in 2026. He has allowed a **21.3** QB rating against, with **1** interception and **2** pass breakups.

GREG SMITH: THE CLEAN SHEET

Strong safety Greg Smith owns the top coverage grade in this secondary at **90.3**, with an **89.2** overall defense grade over **180** snaps. He has **2** interceptions and a **0.0** QB rating against in 2026.

THE NICKEL IS THE SOFT SPOT

Nickel Jaiden Patterson sits at a **50.3** overall defense grade in 2026, the lowest of the listed UNC secondary regulars. He has logged **165** snaps and a **75.4** QB rating against.

MOZER DRAWS THE IRISH COVER GRADES

UNC's leading receiver Marcus Mozer has **24** targets and **96** routes (**14.6%** target share) with a **61.0** pass-route grade. Notre Dame answers with CB Leonard Moore (**74.1** coverage grade, **48.8** QB rating against) and S Adon Shuler (**72.6** coverage grade, **39.6** QB rating against).

FAISON IS THE IRISH FUNNEL, AND PORTER IS OUT

WR Jordan Faison leads Notre Dame at a **21.7%** target share (**23** targets, **91** routes) in 2026. The room is thinner with portal WR Quincy Porter out for the season (knee), leaving Micah Gilbert (**17.0%** target share) as the next option.

2025 SECONDARY – UNIT VS UNIT

ND vs UNC – same prior-season grain on every row			
METRIC	ND	UNC	
Team Def PFF	72.2	74.9	
INT / Sacks	21 · 34 · Rk 9	15 · 32 · Rk 30	
PAPG allowed	17.6	26.5	
Cov grade / FI%	66.6 · 30.9% · team · snap-wtd	69.3 · 9.7% · team · snap-wtd	
CB1 Cov / FI% / QB-rtg	Adon Shuler 72.6 · 100.0% · 39.6 · S	Greg Smith 75.8 · 33.3% · 0.0 · S	

PROJECTED WR / CB MATCHUPS

ND routes vs UNC coverage · UNC routes vs ND coverage (PFF season boards)

ND WR THREATS

WR	RTE	YPRR	ADOT
Jordan Faison	74.9	3.1	11.3
Micah Gilbert	62.7	1.9	13.7
Nolan James	73.7	5.5	0.4

UNC COVERAGE

CB/S	POS	COV	FI%	QB-RTG
Greg Smith	S	75.8	33.3%	0.0
Jaiden Patterson	CB	67.6	20.0%	75.4
Derek McDonald	LB	58.6	0.0%	79.7

UNC WR THREATS

WR	RTE	YPRR	ADOT
Trey Olsen	58.8	1.7	19.9
Marcus Mozer	61.0	1.6	13.4
Garrett Harstad	63.3	1.5	7.8

ND COVERAGE

CB/S	POS	COV	FI%	QB-RTG
Adon Shuler	S	72.6	100.0%	39.6
Leonard Moore	CB	74.1	20.0%	48.8
Drayk Bowen	LB	60.5	0.0%	86.8



BETTING MARKETS

Lines & Angles

Notre Dame's 34.5 Team Total Sets the Bar at Kenan

GAME LINES (BETTINGPROS LIVE)

MARKET	TEAM	SIDE	LINE	PRICE
Total	Game	Over	46.5	-110
Total	Game	Under	46.5	-108

FEATURED PLAYER PROPS VS 2026 SEASON REG AVG/GAME

PLAYER	PROP	LINE	PRICE
Notre Dame Fighting Irish	Total Points	34.5	-110
North Carolina Tar Heels	Total Points	12.5	-120
Jordan Shipp	Rec Yds	42.5	-115
Mason Humphrey	Rec Yds	25	-124
Micah Gilbert	Rec Yds	54.5	-114
Jordan Faison	Rec Yds	70.5	-114
Jelani Thurman	Rec Yds	29.5	-119
Trech Kekahuna	Rec Yds	16.5	-119

Positive 'Line vs Avg' = per-game average above tonight's line. L5/L10/Season 0% = share of REG games clearing tonight's line before this game.

Live season futures from BettingPros – broadcast context only.

THE NUMBER LIVES IN THE TEAM TOTALS, NOT THE GAME TOTAL.

BettingPros posts the game total at **46.5** with Over **-110** and Under **-108**, but the sharper split is Notre Dame **34.5 (-110)** against North Carolina **12.5 (-120)**. The two team totals sum to **47**, a full half-point above the game number.

CJ CARR'S LINE IS PRICED LIKE A BLOWOUT SCRIPT.

The Notre Dame quarterback carries a **241.5** Pass Yds line at **-114**, with **1.5** Pass TD at **-144** and **0.5** Interceptions at **+130**. Through the 2026 season he sits **53-73 (72.6%)** for **726** yds, **6** TD, **0** INT.

NORTH CAROLINA IS ASKED TO SURVIVE ON 155.5 PASSING YARDS.

Billy Edwards Jr.'s Pass Yds line is **155.5 (-114)**, with **0.5** Pass TD at **-150** and **0.5** INT at **-209**, the second-heaviest juice on the prop sheet. He enters at **44-78 (56.4%)** for **611** yds, **3** TD, **1** INT in 2026.

NOTRE DAME'S BACKFIELD IS A THREE-WAY PROP BOARD.

Aneyas Williams (**74.5, -114**), Nolan James Jr. (**61.5, -114**) and Nolan James (**79.5, +118**) all carry Rush Yds lines. On the season Nolan James has **39** att, **169** yds, **3** TD and Williams **38** att, **144** yds, **3** TD.

THE RECEIVING PROPS RUN THROUGH TWO IRISH WIDEOUTS.

Jordan Faison owns a **70.5** Rec Yds line at **-114** and Micah Gilbert a **54.5** at **-114**. North Carolina's Marcus Mozer leads all pass-catchers in this game at **19** rec, **279** yds, **3** TD.

NORTH CAROLINA'S TIGHT-END DEFENSE IS THE TARGET.

The Tar Heels surrender **43.5** yds per game to opposing tight ends, **#361** of **404** all teams on this profile board. Notre Dame's Cooper Flanagan carries an **18.5** Rec Yds line at **-114**, and the Irish allow only **12.5** yds per game to the position (**#161** of **404**).

FANTASY / PLAYER IMPACT

Broadcast Color

Carr's Clean Sheet Meets a Leaky UNC Secondary: Fantasy Names to Know for ND @ UNC

SKILL ROLES ON FILE

TM	QB1	RB1	WR1
ND	CJ Carr	Aneyas Williams	Micah Gilbert
UNC	Billy Edwards	Demon June	Marcus Mozer

Top fantasy options entering tonight from **2026 season** production (season per-game average plus recent form).

FANTASY PRODUCERS TO KNOW

TEAM	PLAYER	POS	FANTASY PTS/G	L3 AVG	L3 VS SEASON	G	20+ PT G
ND	CJ Carr	QB	23.6	23.6	+0.0	3	2
ND	Micah Gilbert	WR	16.0	16.0	+0.0	3	1
ND	Nolan James	RB	15.6	15.2	-0.3	4	0
UNC	Benjamin Hall	RB	13.2	13.2	+0.0	3	1
UNC	Billy Edwards	QB	12.4	12.4	+0.0	3	0
UNC	Demon June	RB	11.8	11.8	+0.0	3	1

Half-PPR fantasy proxy. L3 = last three games before tonight.

CJ CARR ARRIVES AS THE CLEAN-SHEET QB1

Carr sits at **23.6** fantasy points per game on **726** pass yards, **6** touchdowns, and zero interceptions, completing **72.6% (53 of 73)**. The board prices his passing yards at **241.5 (-114)**, **1.5** pass touchdowns at **-144**, and interceptions over **0.5** at **+130**.

THE NOTRE DAME BACKFIELD COMES IN TWO FLAVORS

Nolan James and Aneyas Williams have each rushed for **3** touchdowns. James owns **56** touches and a printed **9.4%** target share (**39** carries, **169** yards; **7** catches, **73** yards) with a **78.3** PFF run grade and **3.44** yards after contact per attempt. Williams carries a **74.5** rushing yards prop at **-114** and a rushing touchdown over **0.5** at **-135**.

JORDAN FAISON AGAINST THE SOFTEST SPLIT ON THE BOARD

Faison's **74.9** route grade and **3.14** yards per route run line up against a UNC defense allowing **165.9** pass yards per game (**#122** of **401**) and **107.5** receiving yards per game to wide receivers (**#163** of **404**). His receiving yards prop is **70.5 (-114)** with a receiving touchdown over **0.5** at **+120**.

MICAH GILBERT OWNS THE DEEP SHOTS

Gilbert leads Notre Dame with **251** receiving yards and **16.0** fantasy points per game, working a **13.7** average depth of target across **13** catches. His receiving yards line is **54.5 (-114)** with a longest reception over **24.5** at **-125**.

BENJAMIN HALL IS ALL GAS, NO SCORES

Hall has piled up **215** rushing yards at **6.5** per carry with a **43.3%** breakaway rate, **9** explosive runs, and an elusive rating of **146.4** on **33** carries, yet has zero touchdowns. His rushing yards prop sits at **32.5 (-114)**.

DEMON JUNE CARRIES THE TAR HEEL RED-ZONE EQUITY

June has turned **25** carries into **115** yards and **4** rushing touchdowns, good for **11.8** fantasy points per game. UNC's red-zone offense has scored on **91%** of its **11** trips with **6** touchdowns.



ND OFFENSE NOTES

Notre Dame

11 starters · depth: twodeep

STARTERS

	WR Jordan Faison - Two-sport standout from Fort Lauderdale who gave up Notre Dame lacrosse after spring 2026 to focus on football; joined the football program as a walk-on in 2023 and won a lacrosse national title as a freshman midfielder in 2024. - Led the Irish in receiving in 2025 with 49 catches for 640 yards and 4 touchdowns, and added 15 punt returns for 153 yards; was the 2023 Sun Bowl MVP after a 115-yard day against Oregon State. - CJ Carr on his favorite target: 'He just has unbelievable feel for everything he does. You see it on the lacrosse field, you see it on the ping-pong table, you see it on the football field.'
	WR2 Jaden Greathouse - Austin, Texas product (Westlake) and a 4-star 2023 signee; broke out as a freshman in 2023 with 16 catches for 252 yards and 5 touchdowns. - Started 11 games in 2024 and posted a career-high 105 receiving yards in the Orange Bowl; hamstring and thigh injuries limited his 2025 to 4 catches for 73 yards in four games. - On sticking around South Bend: 'Notre Dame has been my home the whole time, and I want to make sure I get my degree here.'
	WR3 Micah Gilbert - Charlotte, North Carolina native (Charlotte Christian) and a 4-star 2024 signee; a home-state trip to Chapel Hill this week. - Injury luck has been rough: broke his right hand in spring 2025 and broke fingers in-season; caught CJ Carr's first career touchdown pass at Miami and finished 2025 with 9 catches for 93 yards and 1 score. - His 8-catch, 170-yard night against Michigan State in 2026 was the most receiving yards by an Irish wideout since Chase Claypool in 2017.
	C Ashton Craig - Lawrenceburg, Indiana native and 2022 3-star signee (No. 521 nationally); listed at 6-5, 310 and holds the starting center job. - Knee injuries have cost him time throughout his career, with ACL tears cutting short both 2024 and 2025; he spent the 2026 spring rehabbing and returned to the lineup. - On the comeback: 'I feel better right now, better than last year. Just trying to close the distance every day.'
	LG Anthonie Knapp - Roswell, Georgia product and a 4-star 2024 signee; started 27 of Notre Dame's last 28 games at left tackle before sliding inside to left guard for 2026. - Athlon Sports second-team preseason All-American at guard; allowed only one sack over his past 20 games and missed just one start in 2024-25, the CFP national championship game. - At 6-4, 304 he profiles as an interior lineman after two seasons anchoring the edge.
	LT Will Black - London, Ontario native and Choate Rosemary Hall (Connecticut) product; a 5-star, top-30 national recruit in the 2025 class. - Didn't play American football until 2023 after growing up with hockey, basketball and lacrosse; logged just 27 offensive snaps as a redshirt freshman in 2025, all in mop-up duty against Navy and Stanford. - Listed at 6-7, 316 and steps in as the 2026 left tackle.
	RG Sullivan Absher - Belmont, North Carolina native (South Point) and a 4-star 2023 signee; a home-state trip this week. - Started the final five games of 2025 at left guard and flips over to right guard for 2026. - Listed at 6-5, 309 and pairs with Guerby Lambert to form the right side of the line.
	RT Guerby Lambert - West Roxbury, Massachusetts product (Catholic Memorial) and a top-50 national recruit in the 2024 class, No. 46 overall. - Started all 12 games at right guard in 2025 and moves out to right tackle for 2026, the position he played in high school. - Did not allow a sack over 670 snaps last season.
	TE Cooper Flanagan - Concord, California product (De La Salle) and a 4-star 2023 signee; Marcus Freeman calls him 'the alpha' of the tight end room. - Caught a 2-yard touchdown in the 2026 home opener against Rice and another 2-yard score at Purdue; had 4 catches for 55 yards and 2 touchdowns in 2024. - Freeman on Flanagan: 'When I think of the alpha, I think of Coop. I'm talking about an alpha male and he is that.'
	QB CJ Carr - Saline, Michigan product with deep Wolverine roots: grandfather Lloyd Carr won a national championship as Michigan's head coach, and CJ still chose Notre Dame. - Entering his second season as the starter and a team captain; threw for 2,741 yards and 24 touchdowns in 2025 and owns an 86.0 offense grade in the 2026 sample, tops on this matchup's board. - Freeman on his quarterback: 'It helps you sleep a bit better at night knowing he's the one running your offense.'
RB Aneyas Williams	- Hannibal, Missouri product and a 4-star 2024 signee; opened 2026 with 90 rushing yards and two touchdowns against Wisconsin at Lambeau Field. - Rushed for 224 yards and 5 touchdowns on just 24 carries in 2025, and added 135 yards and 2 scores as a freshman in 2024. - Worked back from offseason elbow surgery to keep the RB1 job, with Freeman saying 'you're obviously going to see Aneyas out there.'

UNC OFFENSE NOTES

North Carolina

11 starters · depth: twodeep

STARTERS

	WR Jordan Shipp - Homegrown junior WR1, No. 1, listed 6-foot-2, 200 pounds, and the offense's leading holdover target: 54 receptions for 574 rec yds and 6 rec TD in 2025. - Drew a team-high eight targets in the 2026 season opener and has settled in as a vocal leader of the receiver room. - On teammate Jelani Thurman: 'There's no linebacker I feel like in the country that's going to stay in front of him.'
	WR Mason Humphrey - Senior transfer from Lehigh, listed as WR2 in No. 4. - Produced at the FCS level: 2025 at Lehigh he posted 30 receptions for 518 rec yds and 4 rec TD. - Through the 2026 sample with the Tar Heels: 3 receptions for 38 yds on 10 targets.
	WR Trech Kekahuna - Wisconsin transfer, a redshirt junior in No. 2, who works mainly from the slot. - Dual-threat profile from his Badger season: 2025 he logged 24 receptions for 196 rec yds while adding 14 carries for 129 rush yds and 1 rush TD. 2026 at Carolina: 6 receptions for 71 yds on 8 targets.
	C Christo Kelly - Graduate transfer from Holy Cross, listed 6-foot-4, 310 pounds, and the anchor at center in No. 56. 2026 PFF line: 70.8 pass-block grade with 4 pressures and 1 sack allowed. - FCS-to-Power bridge to Belichick's rebuilt interior.
	LG Andrew Threatt - Senior transfer from Charleston Southern, listed 6-foot-3, 320 pounds in No. 75. 2026 PFF line: 63.1 pass-block grade with 3 pressures allowed. - Another small-school addition on a line that turned over heavily this cycle.
	LT Jordan Hall - Junior listed 6-foot-8, 310 pounds in No. 66, a transfer addition by way of UAB. 2026 PFF line at tackle: 54.0 pass-block grade; he has allowed 8 pressures and 1 sack. - Longest frame in the starting five.
	RG Aidan Banfield - Junior returner at 6-foot-3, 300 pounds in No. 68. - Logged 1 tackle on his 2025 defensive/roster line. 2026 PFF line: 76.6 pass-block grade, 1 pressure allowed.
	RT Jacqawn McRoy - Goes by Shaq; a sophomore transfer from Arkansas listed 6-foot-8, 330 pounds in No. 71. 2026 PFF line at right tackle: 76.3 pass-block grade with 2 pressures allowed. - Even logged a 1-yd rushing touchdown in 2025 on a single carry.
	TE Jelani Thurman - Ohio State transfer, a redshirt junior at 6-foot-6, 245 pounds in No. 45, and the offense's most-targeted weapon: 2026 he has 11 receptions for 183 rec yds and 1 TD. - In the 2026 opener he caught 4 balls for 94 yds, surpassing his entire 2025 Buckeye line (7 receptions, 84 rec yds, 1 TD). - Bill Belichick: 'Jelani's been a real weapon for us.' He sits on the Mackey Award watch list.
	QB Billy Edwards Jr. - Graduate transfer from Wisconsin, No. 9, who won the 2026 quarterback competition and emerged as the starter. 2026: 44-of-78 (56.4%) for 611 pass yds, 3 TD and 1 INT, plus 15 carries for 7 rush yds. - After the Clemson loss Belichick said the passing-game struggles are not all on the quarterback.
	RB Benjamin Hall - Junior returner at 5-foot-11, 230 pounds in No. 7; 2025 he logged 71 carries for 274 rush yds and 2 rush TD. 2026 sample: 33 carries for 215 rush yds plus 4 receptions for 42 yds and 2 rec TD. - Set a career high with 130 rushing yards at Clemson in 2026.



ND DEFENSE NOTES

Notre Dame

6 starters · depth: twodeep

STARTERS



DE Boubacar Traore

- Notre Dame's No. 5 boundary end and the veteran anchor of a front that returns both starting edge defenders.
- The depth board credits him with 37 tackles, 6.5 sacks and 10.0 tackles for loss in 2025, and he carries the top 2026 pass-rush grade on this defense at 76.5 PFF across 131 snaps.
- He delivered one of the loudest plays of the young season, scooping a fumble and returning it 24 yards for a touchdown. 'I seen the ball on the ground and I was like, Wow,' Traore said. 'As soon as I picked it up, I knew it was real life.'

DE2 Bryce Young

- The other half of Notre Dame's returning edge pair, wearing No. 95, a former top recruit who has grown into a full-time starter.
- Listed at 20 tackles, 2.0 sacks, 2.0 tackles for loss and 3 pass breakups for 2025. In the 2026 sample he leads the Irish with 3.5 tackles for loss through two games, with a 70.4 overall and 67.6 pass-rush PFF grade.
- On facing an explosive back: 'He's a very explosive back, kudos to him, but I'm excited to get out there and see what our defense can do.' He frames the unit's identity this way: 'Coach says clarity equals velocity, so we're going to go out there and play fast and play violent.'



DT Armel Mukam

- The interior starter wears No. 88 and is listed at 6-3, 300 pounds.
- The depth board credits him with 5 tackles and 1.5 tackles for loss in 2025. His 2026 sample shows a 63.8 overall and 65.0 run-defense PFF grade across 94 snaps.
- Part of a deep interior rotation, with Pittsburgh transfer Francis Brewu listed directly behind him on the depth board.



DT2 Tionne Gray

- The Oregon transfer, listed at 6-5, 320 pounds, arrived this cycle to reinforce the interior run defense.
- At Oregon in 2025 he posted 18 tackles and 2.0 tackles for loss, grading 63.3 overall with a 66.0 run-defense PFF mark over 112 snaps.
- In the 2026 sample he sits at a 66.7 overall and 65.5 run-defense grade.



CB Leonard Moore

- Notre Dame's No. 15 boundary corner, billed as a unanimous All-American as a true sophomore in 2025 and the top returning corner in the country.
- The depth board lists 31 tackles and 7 pass breakups in 2025, and he intercepted 5 passes over that regular season while grading 79.5 overall with a 79.4 coverage mark from the right corner across 178 snaps.
- His 2026 sample shows a 71.6 overall and 70.5 coverage PFF grade across 171 snaps.



CB2 DJ McKinney

- The Colorado transfer, No. 2, joins an experienced Notre Dame back end that also added Michigan transfer Jayden Sanders.
- At Colorado in 2025 he graded 62.4 overall with a 62.4 coverage mark from left corner across 292 snaps, and 65.4 overall from right corner.
- In the 2026 sample he carries a 68.9 overall and 66.3 coverage PFF grade across 139 snaps.

UNC DEFENSE NOTES

North Carolina

11 starters · depth: twodeep

STARTERS



DE Melkart Abou Jaoude

- On the injury report as Out (undisclosed) entering the week after he left the TCU game hurt; his logged expected return date has already passed.
- The reigning ACC sacks leader: 10.5 sacks, 12.0 tackles for loss and 46 tackles in 2025.
- 6-foot-5, 260-pound Delaware transfer out of Newton, N.J.; 2026 PFF pass-rush grade 87.6 across 53 snaps.



DE Jaylen Harvey

- Penn State transfer, 6-foot-2, 246 pounds, from Gaithersburg, Md.
- 2026 PFF defense grade 76.4 with a 70.1 pass-rush mark across 137 snaps.
- Logged two second-quarter sacks against ETSU in 2026 and hurried the quarterback into Greg Smith's interception.



DT Isaiah Johnson

- Redshirt senior transfer from Arizona, 6-foot-2, 320 pounds, from Camden, N.J.
- 2026 PFF defense grade 70.4 and run-defense 71.8 across 125 snaps.
- Peyton Seelmann cites him among the leaders who bring the energy and mindset up front.



DT Xavier Lewis

- Sophomore from Raleigh, 6-foot-0, 250 pounds.
- Owns the defense's top 2026 PFF grade at 81.1 overall with a 77.7 pass-rush mark across 145 snaps.
- Named MVP of the Aer Lingus Classic; Seelmann on him: 'He's a stud. He's a humble dude. He just goes to work every day.'



LB Derek McDonald

- Graduate transfer from Syracuse with five years of ACC experience; wears the green dot and relays the defensive calls.
- Leads the team in tackles while playing the second-most snaps on defense in 2026.
- Bill Belichick on him: 'He probably understands our defense as well as anybody.'



LB Peyton Seelmann

- Richmond transfer, 6-foot-1, 225 pounds; roommates with fellow linebacker Derek McDonald.
- Led the team with 10 tackles, seven of them solo, against ETSU in 2026.
- Belichick on him: 'He's pretty instinctive, he's a good tackler, he's fast.'



CB Jaiden Patterson

- Junior from Dacula, Ga., 6-foot-1, 195 pounds; one of the listed starting corners.
- 2026 PFF coverage grade 55.1 across 165 snaps.
- Posted six solo tackles against Clemson in 2025, his best game of that season.



CB Tre Miller

- Redshirt junior from Birmingham, Ala., 5-foot-10, 180 pounds.
- 2026 PFF coverage grade 60.3 across 87 snaps.
- Noted as a starter opposite Patterson, and early 2026 grades have outpaced his 2025 marks.



NB Kaleb Cost

- Known as 'K2'; a two-sport athlete who also plays baseball, with nearly 1,400 career snaps as a Tar Heel.
- Bill Belichick on him: 'He's a three-year starter, really. We could probably leave out there for every single down unless we're on offense.'
- 2026 PFF coverage grade 67.6 across 136 snaps; 5-foot-11, 195 pounds, from Atlanta.



S Greg Smith

- Florida transfer, 6-foot-4, 215 pounds, from Riverview, Fla.
- 2026 PFF defense grade 79.5 with a 79.2 coverage mark across 181 snaps.
- Recorded the lone interception against ETSU in 2026.

S Peyton Waters

- Washington transfer, 6-foot-1, 185 pounds, from Northridge, Calif.
- Started at single-high/free safety in the 2026 opener; 2026 PFF coverage grade 58.5 across 152 snaps.
- One of the first players in drills during fall camp, per practice reports.



ND ST & COACHING NOTES

Notre Dame

6 starters · depth: twodeep

SPECIAL TEAMS

KO Micah Drescher

- True freshman from Hinsdale (Ill.) Central, rated Rivals' No. 9 kicker in the 2026 class. A former Michigan signee who flipped to Notre Dame on a scholarship and helped close the program's No. 2-ranked 2026 signing class.
- On the current two-deep on the kickoff line, working alongside junior Spencer Porath, who owns placements. Freshman leg handling the deep-ball duty in a six-specialist room.

PK Spencer Porath

- Purdue transfer who enrolled in January. In 2025 with the Boilermakers he hit 15-of-17 field goals with a long of 53 yards and made all 9 of his attempts from inside 40 yards.
- 2026 sample: 5-of-6 on field goals with a long of 52 yards, that 52-yarder coming against Wisconsin.
- Won the 95th Blue-Gold spring game with a 43-yard walk-off field goal in front of 45,308 fans. Marcus Freeman stacked players around him to simulate pressure before the kick.

P Jasper Scaife

- Australian punter from West Perth with an Australian Football League background and a scratch golf game. The 6-foot-6 first-year player also holds on placement kicks and turns 22 in late September.
- 2026 sample: 7 punts at a 45.9-yard average.
- Special teams coordinator Marty Biagi on him: 'He is a stone-cold competitor. Even when recruiting him, it was like, Hey, if I come here, it's all business. I have intention.'

LS Joseph Vinci

- Third year as the primary long snapper, having taken over the job midway through his freshman year in 2024.
- Recorded 2 tackles in 2025. He snaps for the program's second straight Australian punter, following James Rendell and now Jasper Scaife.
- On the snapper-punter bond: 'Like a catcher and a pitcher in baseball, you know what to expect pretty much.' He is also listed at 6-4, 231 pounds.

KR Aneyas Williams

- Listed on the top kick-return line of the two-deep. 2026 sample: 2 kick returns for 42 yards.
- In 2025 he carried 24 times for 224 rushing yards and 5 touchdowns, with 2 catches for 40 yards.
- 2026 rushing sample: 38 carries for 144 yards (3.8 per carry) and 3 touchdowns. A zone-leaning back at 26 zone attempts to 12 gap attempts, with a 67.2 PFF run grade and a 54.4 elusive rating.

PR Jordan Faison

- First-team punt returner with 5 returns for 70 yards in the 2026 sample, ahead of Dallas Golden (4 returns, 12 yards) on the depth chart.
- Offensively in 2026: 13 catches for 173 yards and 2 touchdowns.
- 2025 receiving line: 49 receptions for 640 yards and 4 touchdowns.

COACHING / MANAGEMENT

HC Marcus Freeman

- 6th season as head coach, first HC season at Notre Dame in 2021. Career at the school is 58-13, including a 4-0 start (0-0 conference) in 2026.
- Led the Irish to nearly 42 points per game in 2025.
- On QB CJ Carr: 'He's almost like a version of a coordinator on the field. He's able to see a defense and anticipate what the defense is gonna be and put our offense in a position to not have a negative play.'

OC Mike Denbrock

- Third season in South Bend as offensive coordinator, now steering the offense through junior QB CJ Carr.
- On the offensive identity: 'We're built around the run game. That's Notre Dame football. That's my philosophy. That's Coach Freeman's philosophy. That's who we are. So we're going to have a strong run game.'
- In 2023 at LSU with Jayden Daniels his offense averaged 45.5 points per game and 8.4 yards per snap.

DC Chris Ash

- Second-year defensive coordinator. He oversaw an offseason overhaul that brought in position coaches Charlie Partridge (defensive line), Brian Jean-Mary (linebackers) and Aaron Henry (defensive backs).
- On blending the new staff's ideas into the scheme: 'They do have some new ideas and new things, different ways to coach positionally, but our system is our system.'
- Former head coach at Rutgers from 2016-19. Freeman on the defensive room: 'Credit to coach Ash for leading that room.'

Co-DC/DBs Aaron Henry

- Hired from Illinois, where he spent three seasons as the Illini defensive coordinator (2023-25) after two years as the DBs coach.
- Played cornerback and safety at Wisconsin, where Chris Ash was his position coach, and coached under Ash at Rutgers in 2016.
- Developed Illinois corner Devon Witherspoon into the No. 5 overall NFL draft pick by Seattle, citing that work: 'If I can take a zero-star recruit like Devon Witherspoon to help develop into a top-five draft, I only imagine what I could do with guys who are walking in here.'

ST Coordinator Marty Biagi

- Special teams coordinator who also assists with the secondary, one of the three coordinators Freeman returned for 2026 alongside Mike Denbrock and Chris Ash.
- A former kicker and punter at Marshall who has coached a string of Australian punters, including James Rendell and now Jasper Scaife. Previously a co-defensive coordinator at Arkansas-Pine Bluff in 2011.
- Freeman on the continuity: 'To have both of those guys back, our special teams coordinator back, and then players in important positions.'

UNC ST & COACHING NOTES

North Carolina

4 starters · depth: twodeep

SPECIAL TEAMS

K Aeron Burrell

- LSU transfer kicker and kickoff specialist, junior with two seasons in Baton Rouge before landing at Carolina.
- His LSU freshman year produced 74 kickoffs for 4,794 yards (64.78-yard average), leading the SEC and ranking No. 3 nationally; he owns 111 career touchbacks on 140 kickoffs.
- 2024 second-team All-SEC and Freshman All-SEC. 2026 sample: 4-of-6 on field goals, 3-of-3 on extra points (PFF special teams).

KO Rece Verhoff

- Graduate transfer from Marshall listed on the kickoff line; flagged OUT (undisclosed) on the availability report.
- At Carolina in 2025 he hit 19-of-23 field goals and 20-of-20 extra points.
- At Marshall in 2024 he was 14-of-19 on field goals and 40-of-40 on extra points.

LS Gannon Burt

- Redshirt junior long snapper and transfer from Florida; did not appear in a game in 2025 at Carolina.
- At Florida in 2024 he played two games, debuting on the road at No. 8 Tennessee and starting against Kentucky with 13 snaps.
- Rated a five-star and the No. 1 long snapper by Rubio Long Snapping out of Fort Mill, S.C.; a Polynesian Bowl All-American.

KR Trech Kekahuna

- Wisconsin transfer listed as the primary kick returner, redshirt junior.
- At Wisconsin in 2025 he carried 14 times for 129 yards and 1 rushing touchdown while adding 26 catches for 211 receiving yards.
- In the 2026 Carolina sample he has 6 catches for 71 yards and works from the slot.

COACHING / MANAGEMENT

HC Bill Belichick

- Second season as North Carolina head coach (since 2025). Career at the school is 6-9, including this season's live 2-1 mark and 0-1 in ACC play.
- His 2025 debut finished 4-8, a season that ended without a bowl for the Tar Heels.
- Six-time Super Bowl-winning head coach from his New England Patriots tenure.

OC Bobby Petrino

- Hired Jan. 9, 2026 to replace Freddie Kitchens; in his 41st year of coaching at 65.
- Arkansas in 2025 finished 19th nationally in total offense (454.8 ypg), 25th in scoring (32.9 ppg) and 28th in rushing (191.9 ypg).
- Belichick on the scheme: 'Bobby will call it, and... a lot of the things he did at Arkansas or even going back to Louisville.' Run-first, power-based approach.

DC Steve Belichick

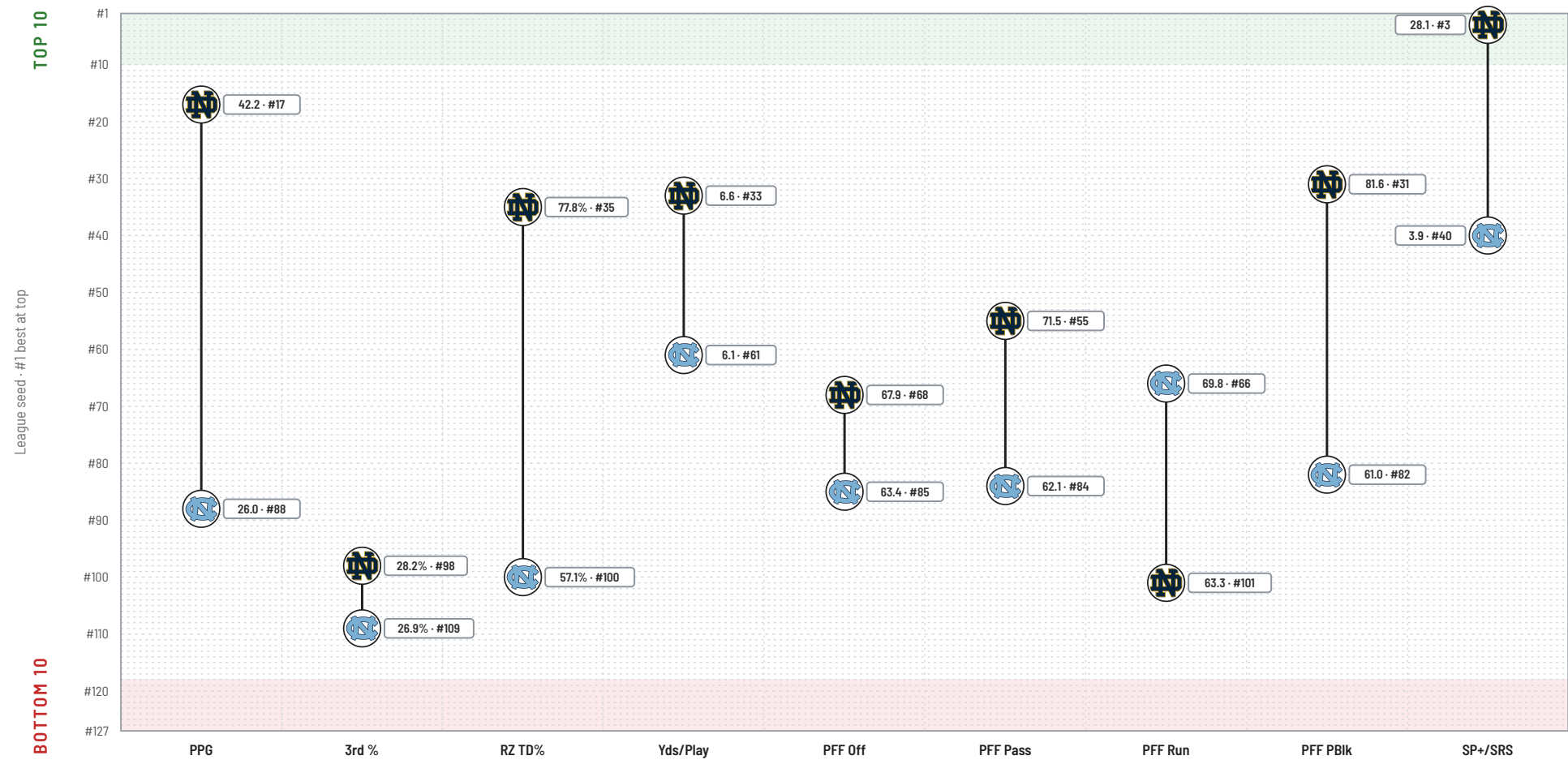
- Returns as defensive coordinator for Year 2 (also listed as Stephen Belichick).
- Placed on medical leave Aug. 6, 2026, missed most of training camp, with no update on his return.

OC (2025, no longer on staff) Freddie Kitchens

- Ran the offense in 2025 and was fired shortly after the season; he is not on the 2026 staff.
- The 2025 Tar Heels averaged 19.2 points per game (118th of 134 FBS) and 288.8 yards per game (129th).

KEY METRICS - OFFENSE

ND vs UNC · 2026 REG · FBS · Offense · League seed #1 is best (lower-better metrics still map best to #1)

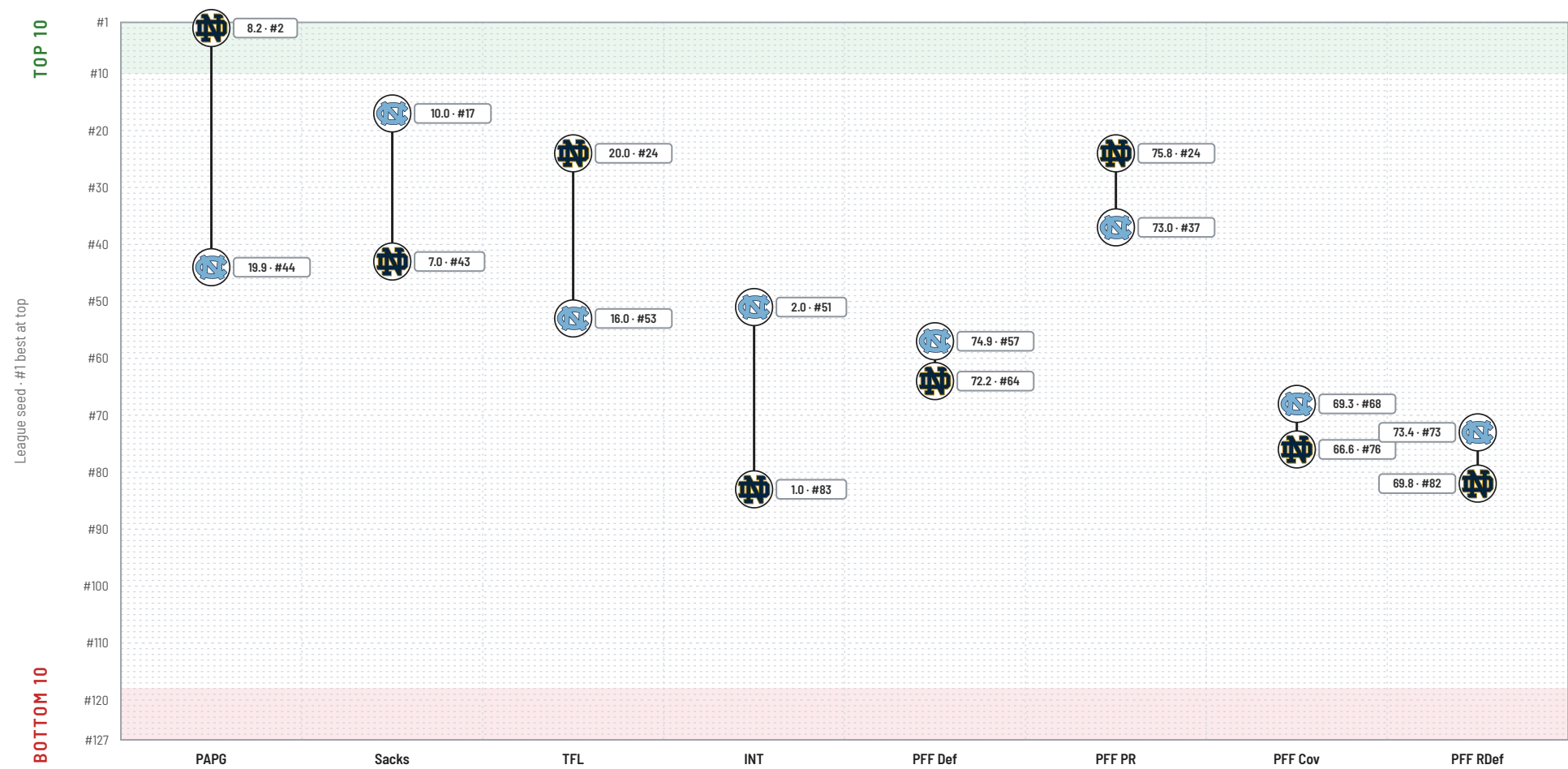


MATCHUP READ

ND PPG #17 vs #88 is the clearest rank separator. Next: ND RZ TD% #35 vs #100. Bottom line: ride the widest efficiency / rate edges.

KEY METRICS - DEFENSE

ND vs UNC · 2026 REG · FBS · Defense · League seed #1 is best (lower-better metrics still map best to #1)

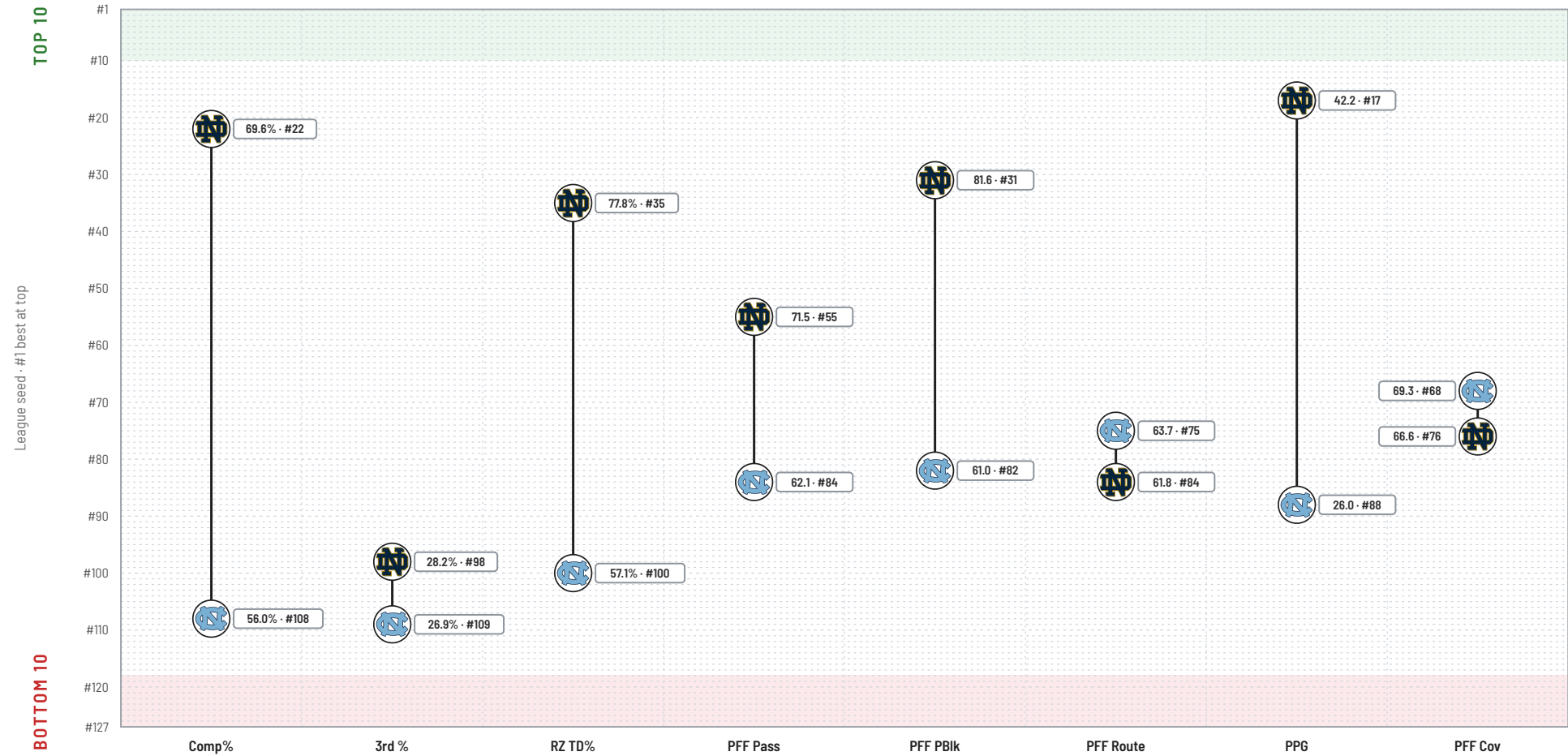


MATCHUP READ

ND PAPG #2 vs #44 is the clearest rank separator. Next: UNC INT #51 vs #83. Bottom line: ride the widest efficiency / rate edges.

KEY METRICS - PASSING

ND vs UNC · 2026 REG · FBS · Passing · League seed #1 is best (lower-better metrics still map best to #1)

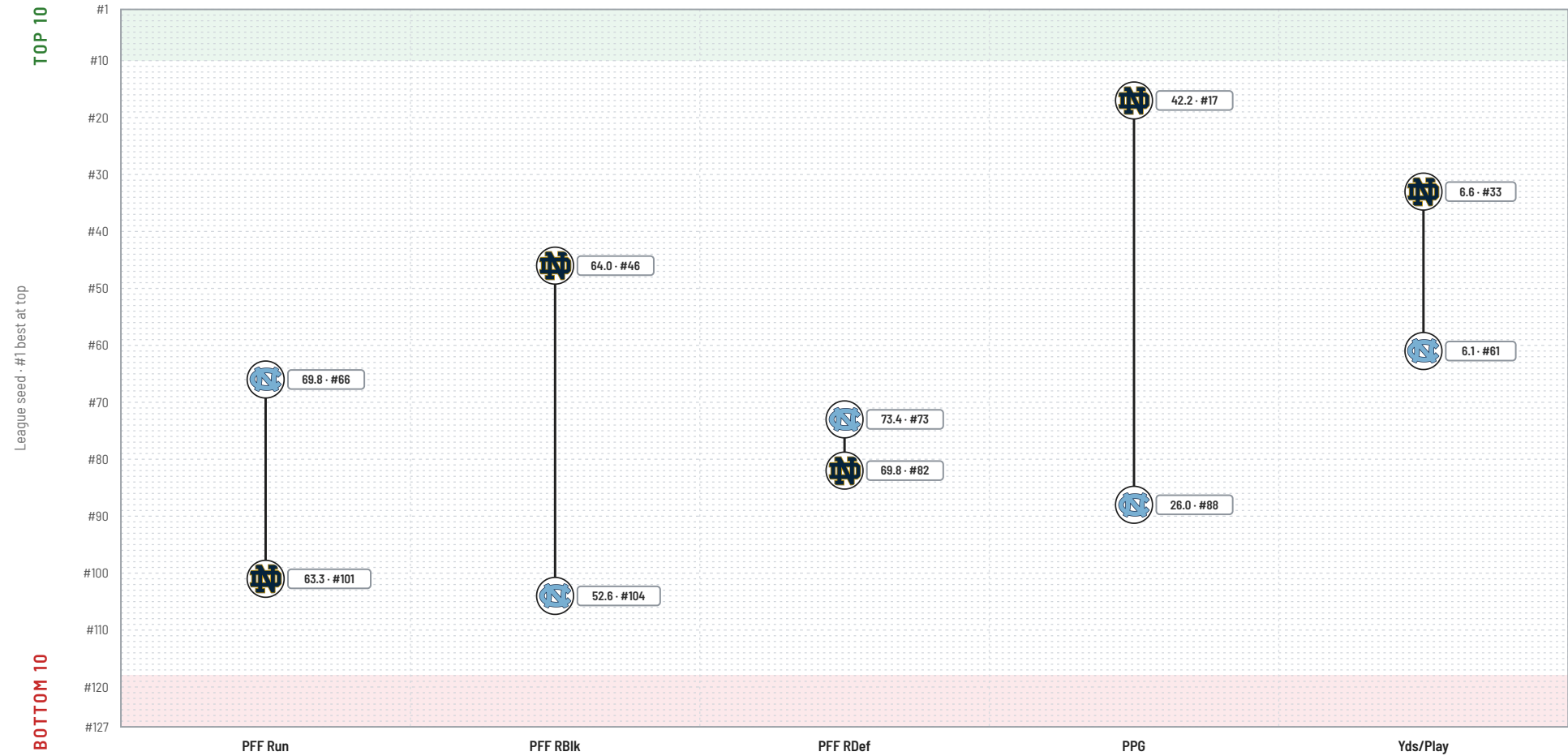


MATCHUP READ

ND Comp% #22 vs #108 is the clearest rank separator. Next: ND PPG #17 vs #88. Bottom line: ride the widest efficiency / rate edges.

KEY METRICS - RUSHING

ND vs UNC · 2026 REG · FBS · Rushing · League seed #1 is best (lower-better metrics still map best to #1)

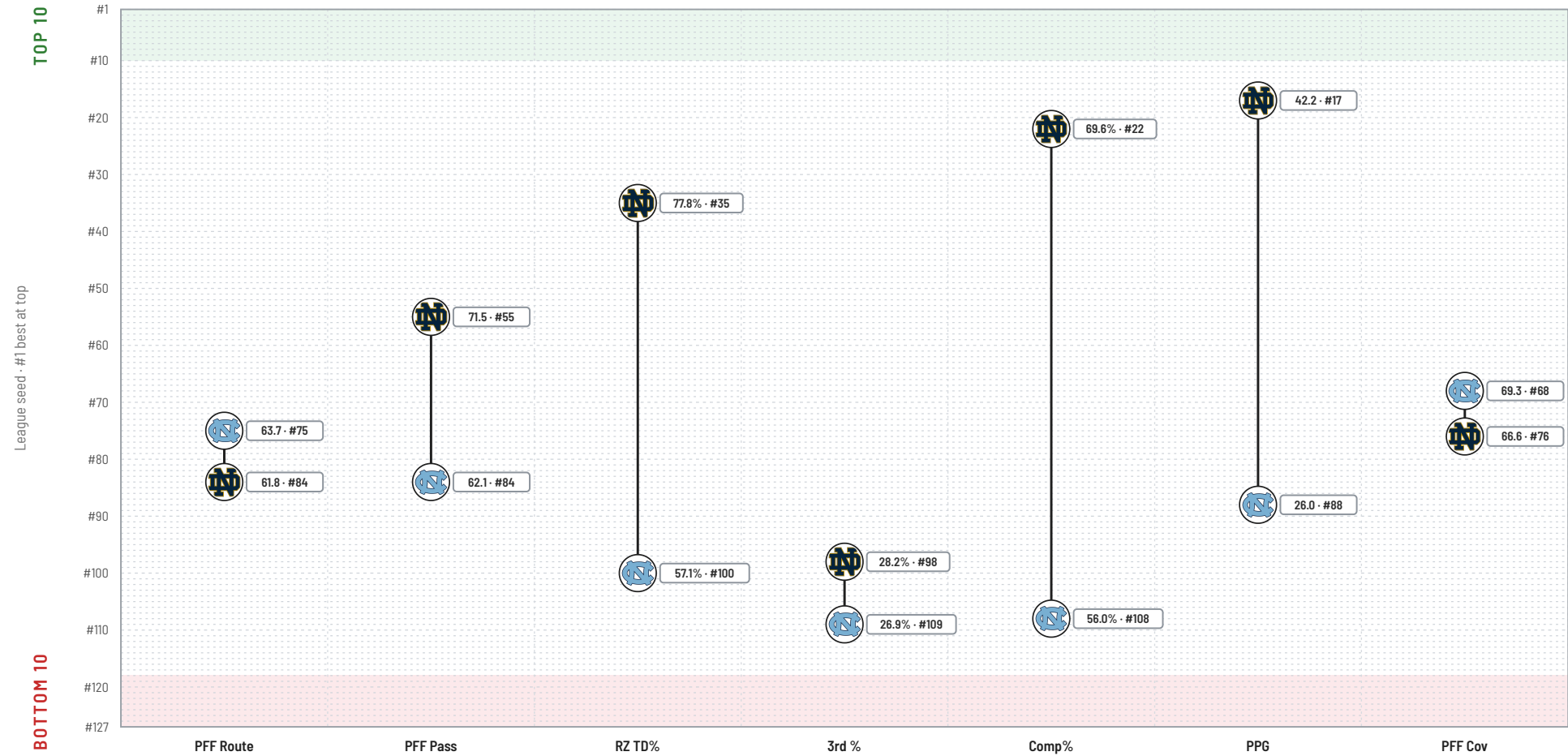


MATCHUP READ

ND PPG #17 vs #88 is the clearest rank separator. Next: ND PFF RBik #46 vs #104. Bottom line: ride the widest efficiency / rate edges.

KEY METRICS - RECEIVING

ND vs UNC · 2026 REG · FBS · Receiving · League seed #1 is best (lower-better metrics still map best to #1)

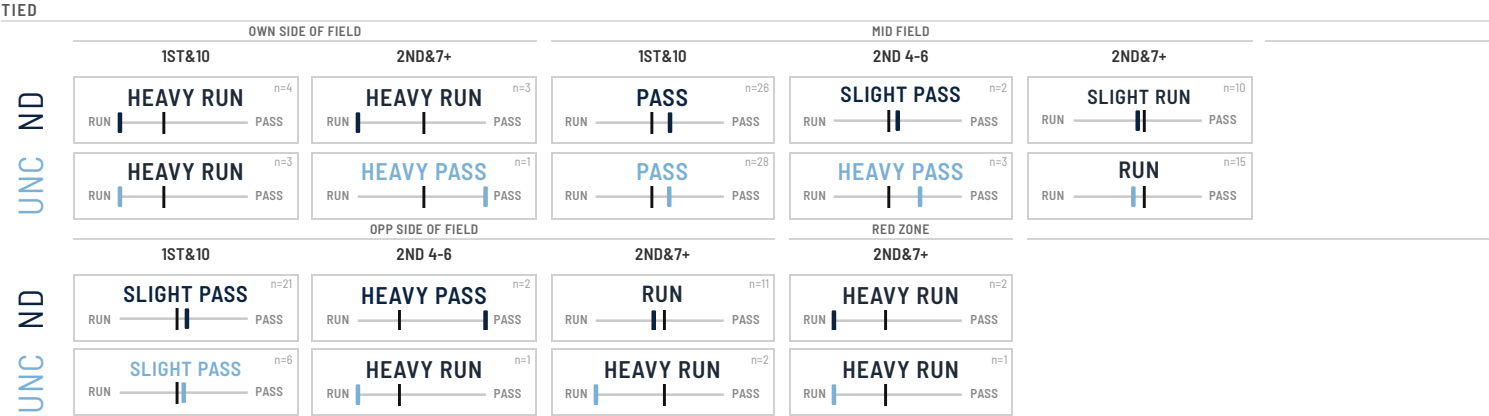


MATCHUP READ

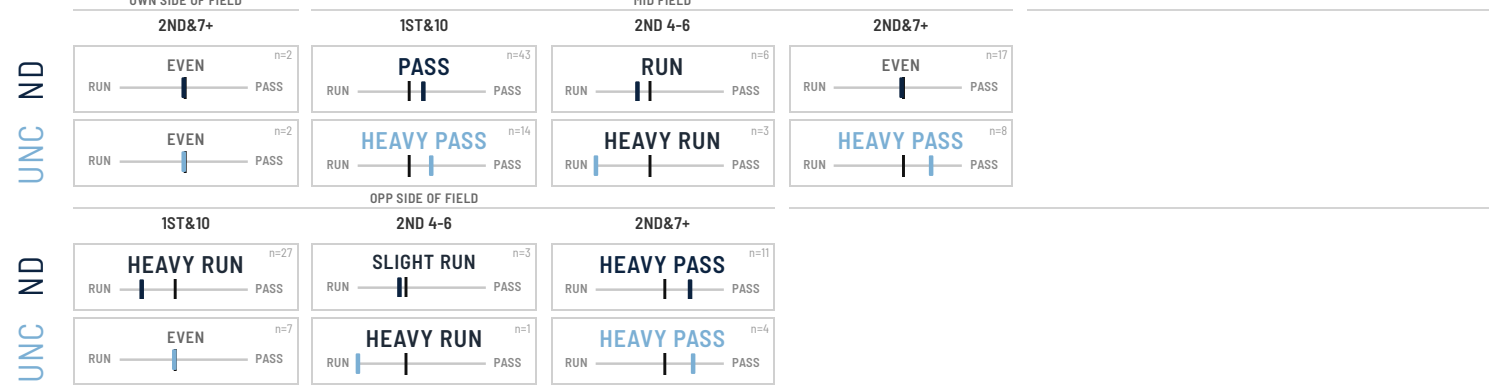
ND Comp% #22 vs #108 is the clearest rank separator. Next: ND PPG #17 vs #88. Bottom line: ride the widest efficiency / rate edges.

Each cell is one live call: down&distance under score, then field. HEAVY RUN / PASS is vs the CFB in that spot (black bar), not vs their season. Team-color bar = this club; black = league. Left = run, right = pass. n = every snap in that cell. Trailing in clutch is Q4, down 1-8, not inside two minutes, by field. 4th down is GO vs FG in toss-up spots only (4th & 2 / 4th & 3-4 by field).

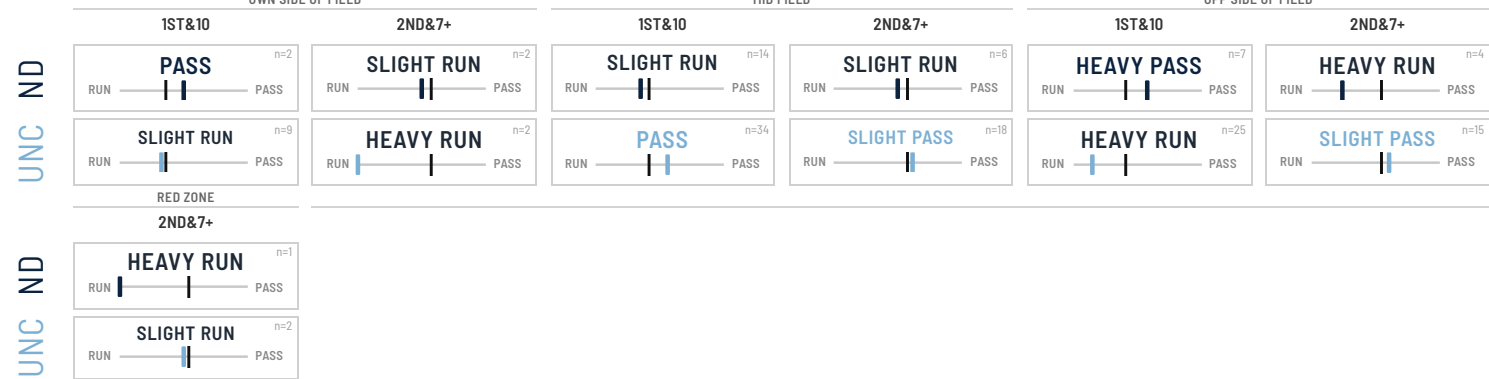
WHEN THE CALL ISN'T SCRIPTED



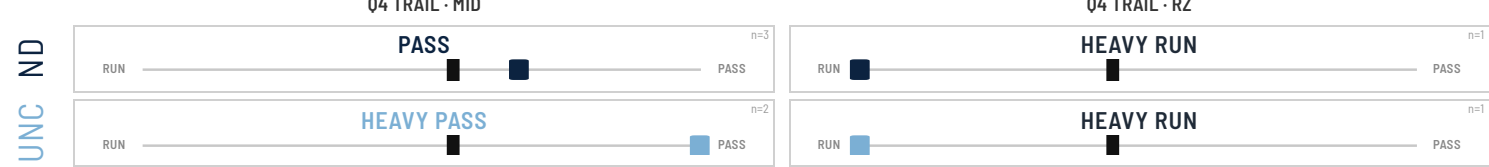
LEADING 1-8



TRAILING 1-8



TRAILING IN CLUTCH



4TH DOWN – GO OR KICK

GO FG · Toss-up 4ths only (league still mixes GO vs kick). 4th & 1 and 4th & 6+ are scripts. Inside the opponent 40. In 20 = inside the 20. 20-40 = opponent 20 to 40. Goal = inside the 10. Black tick = CFB go share.

