



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on November 23, 2009

UConn's Huskies Steal ND's Thunder

Tears, tears for old Notre Dame! That's how the national news media, that "herd of independent minds," is playing the big sports story of last weekend, perhaps the biggest of this year's college football season. Notre Dame lost again to another school that is regarded as something less than a college football powerhouse. The University of Connecticut, still a comparative newcomer in Division 1-A ranks, invaded the storied South Bend campus and didn't have the decency to stop at coming close. The Huskies of UConn ran off with a double-overtime victory and left the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame looking once again like the uninspired Quarreling Multiculturalists of South Bend Secular U.



The final score, though it hardly seems to matter, was 33-30. UConn could have, should have, won the game in regulation play, but missed a last second field goal with the score knotted at 20 each, sending the game into OT. After each team scored a touchdown and extra point in the first extra period, Notre Dame settled for a field goal on its next try and UCONN responded with a touchdown to put a dramatic ending to its first ever football visit to the land of the Golden Dome.

It's not the first time Notre Dame has lost to an upstart at South Bend. It's not the first time the South Bend squad has endured a dismal season as it heads out to the West Coast for the season finale with the Cardinal of Stanford. (No, the Fighting Irish won't be doing any disputing on New Year's Day or at any other time following the Saturday after Thanksgiving. They're "gettin' nuttin' for Christmas.") And while the big story in the national news is the imminent demise of Charlie Weis's career as head coach at South Bend, that overlooks the great achievement of the University of Connecticut's football players, the program headed by coach Randy Edsall, the school's athletic department, and the university itself. And it overlooks the pluck of a bunch of young men who overcame a lot of adversity, including the murder on campus of one of its star players only a month ago, to make Saturday's game one for the ages, with a victory that has put Connecticut forever on the college football map.

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We should not be surprised if there is a motion picture made about Saturday's game at South Bend, and we may be certain the main character will not be sad-faced, teary-eyed Charlie Weis, who faces the enviable misfortune of collecting on about a \$15 million buyout for the remaining years of his long-term contract with the university whose very name is synonymous with excellence, even dominance, in college football. But that was in the days of Rockne, Leahy and, to a lesser extent, Parseghian, Devine, and Holtz, all of whom coached national championship teams at Notre Dame. Weis, whose fate now seems sealed with the powers that be at South Bend, will join the ranks of Brennan, Kuharik, Faust, and Davies, a veritable *Who's Who* of "Who's he?"



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Indeed, Gerry Faust, who coached the Irish squad through five years of mediocrity in the 1980's, may feel a sense of relief at this point. The university's "subway alumni" in Red Sox Nation know what Faust has been going through. Remember Mike Torrez? He was the ill-fated starting pitcher in the famous playoff game between the Yankees and the Red Sox in 1978. It was Torrez who blew the early lead, surrendering a three-run home run to Yankees shortstop Bucky "Bleepin'" Dent. Fast forward to Game 6 of the 1986 World Series, the one that ended in a series-tying, 10-inning victory for the New York Mets when a slow rolling ground ball somehow went between the aching legs of poor Bill Buckner, the unfortunate first baseman. Legend has it that Mike Torrez left the ballpark that night, shouting: "I'm off the hook! I'm off the hook!"

Yes, Bill Buckner still wears goat horns in baseball lore and is reputed to be second only to the Rev. Billy Graham in inspiring the greatest number of people to stand at one time and call upon the name of the Lord. The Red Sox eventually wiped away the curse of the Bambino (for the selling of Babe Ruth and other talented players to the hated Yankees in 1920), the curse of the Bucky and the curse of the Mooky Wilson ground ball that eluded the grasp of Bill Buckner. The Red Sox finally won the World Series, its first since 1918, in 2004, and won another in 2007. Bill Buckner is not in the Hall of Fame, but most fans realize that neither does he belong in the Hall of Shame.

Someday, Notre Dame will win again, too, Lord willing. And Charlie Weis, the fabled offensive coordinator for the three-time Super Ball champion New England Patriots who was lured to South Bend by a lucrative long-term contract, will be mercifully forgotten. Except in the movie, in the style of the "Miracle on Ice" saga about the USA hockey team that defeated the Russians in the 1980 Olympics. The new movie will be about The Game that will live forever in glory at Storrs, Connecticut, home of the UConn Huskies. Perhaps the subplot, the Charlie Weis story, will give some out of work actor, down on his luck, a chance to play the foil, the big-deal coach with the fat contract from Home of Glory University, who was slain by a coach named Edsall one Saturday in November on the big-shot coach's home campus.

On Saturday, November 21, 2009, little David, with his trusty slingshot, slew Goliath again. Immediately the nation's news media turned the sports world's attention to the Goliath deathwatch. Those of us who have long memories of rooting for Notre Dame from childhood may recall that in 1957, the unranked Fighting Irish, a three-touchdown underdog, traveled to Norman, Oklahoma, and ended the University of Oklahoma's record-setting winning streak at 47 by defeating the Sooners in an historic upset. The Notre Dame quarterback disturbed the ecumenical peace, not to mention the constitutional separation of church and gridiron, when he dedicated the win to "every Catholic in the state of Oklahoma."

The University of Notre Dame last spring troubled the consciences of many Catholics, including legions of the school's alumni, by awarding an honorary degree to the nation's foremost defender of "abortion rights," President Barack Obama. The school has seemed a good deal less Catholic since then and less inclined toward charity for those who have disputes with her administrators. Pleas to have the charges dismissed against the "Notre Dame 88," all charged with criminal trespass for peacefully protesting that award on the South Bend campus last spring, have fallen on the deaf ears and stone cold hearts of Father John Jenkins, the president, and, presumably, by the trustees of the university once known for academic excellence and football glory, rather than political heterodoxy and philosophical chaos.

To my knowledge, no one at the University of Connecticut has dedicated Saturday's historic victory to the Notre Dame 88. Understandably, the team has dedicated it to Jasper Howard, the young man so recently killed on the university campus. So this Connecticut native hereby makes the following



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dedication: "Here's to you, 88! May Our Lady, the great Mother of God for whom the University of Notre Dame is named, abandoned by her prodigal sons in the president's office and boardrooms at the university, turn with loving care to the faithful in the dock in a courtroom in Indiana."

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