

The Jimmy Clausen Era Begins

Contributed by Irish Glory
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On September 8, 2007, the Jimmy Clausen Era at Notre Dame will officially begin. On that day, the heralded quarterback will take the field as the starting quarterback at Notre Dame. Is he physically ready for the speed and intricacy of the college game? Not many freshmen quarterbacks are, but this kid is no ordinary freshman quarterback. Is he mentally ready to lead the Notre Dame Irish on the road in front of 110,000 screaming Penn State fans? Time will tell. This much is clear after the events of the past 7 days -- Jimmy Clausen is future of the Irish program at quarterback and Jimmy Clausen gives the Irish the best chance to win a football game this weekend. Here is what I think Charlie Weis saw this week when he was evaluating who to start.

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Demetrius Jones: Demetrius is a tremendous athlete and a better quarterback than he showed last week. He simply is not far enough advanced as a passer to quarterback this team. He has flaws in his delivery and his accuracy is nowhere close to the other 2 quarterbacks. He also did not show that he can protect the football. If you are going to start a quarterback that is going to be predominantly a running QB, you absolutely have to be able to trust that he will hold onto the football. Nevertheless, Demetrius is a tremendous leader, an outgoing kid, and there is certainly a role for him on this football team.

Evan Sharpley: Evan is what he is -- a fine quarterback. However, he is not a starting quarterback on a top 25 team. That is in no way intended as any disrespect to Evan. Evan has a strong arm and when he sets his feet, he is fairly accurate. However, he has a flaw that is extremely tough to correct. He simply does not feel the blitz. Phil Simms, former Giants quarterback, always talks about that as the one skill you cannot teach a quarterback. Either they can feel it or they can't. Watch Evan's eyes when the ball is snapped and the blitz is coming and then compare them to some of the more successful quarterbacks around. Evan's eyes immediately lock on to the blitzer(s) rather than his receivers. There is a reason the kid was sacked 7 times in basically a quarter and a half of play. The fumbled snap is another example. Evan's internal clock, both on feeling the blitz and making his reads/releasing the football, are just a few seconds too slow.

Jimmy Clausen: Poise, presence, and accuracy. Those are the 3 main reasons I think Jimmy Clausen is the quarterback of the present and future for Notre Dame. Go back and watch this kid's high school games, then read the numerous articles written about him. Do yourself another favor and get to the stadium early and watch the kid warm up. When you do that, you will see what I mean. There is just something about the kid. You can call it the "IT" factor or call it whatever you want. His talent is undeniable, but he also has those other intangibles that make a quarterback successful. He reads defenses exceptionally well, he adjusts to the speed of the game, and his release is extraordinarily quick. Notre Dame does not need Jimmy Clausen to be a vocal leader this year. With John Carlson, John Sullivan, and Travis Thomas on offense, there should be enough leadership in the huddle. Notre Dame needs Jimmy to be Jimmy. Get the plays called properly, respect the football, identify the mike linebacker, sell the playaction, and when it is a pass play deliver the ball quickly, accurately, and on time. He can do all those things right now. There will certainly be growing pains and I believe we will see those on Saturday, but there is no doubt Jimmy Clausen has the pedigree, the ability, and the poise to handle being the starting quarterback at Notre Dame as a freshman.