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Welcome back to College Bound Notre Dame Admissions' podcast. I'm Maria Finan, one of the admissions counselors in the office, and we're really excited to be here with you this weekend talking a little bit about game weekend traditions. I'm joined by my colleague Zach, and I'll let him introduce himself.

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Hey everyone! My name is Zach Klonsinski, I'm an assistant director in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and super excited to talk about a home football weekend with all of you today.

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So we're going to take you through we'll start on Friday, which hopefully is when you'll be arriving if you have the opportunity to come to a home Notre Dame football game. And then, of course, take you all the way through Saturday from morning to what you do postgame.

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Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And so this is really exciting, there's just so much energy on campus. It's just such a wonderful time to be at Notre Dame. The fall at Notre Dame is absolutely gorgeous as well, so the campus is at its peak, with the leaves turning and just all the great positive energy for football weekend, so it's really exciting to share that with you. One of the great ways that you can actually take advantage of that and really get to know campus well is by coming for a campus tour. We actually host a lot of information sessions and campus tours with students or, you know, you can do a campus tour through the Alumni Association.

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Really, it's a great way to kick off your football weekend by coming out, learning more about the university, learning about our admissions process, getting to ask and answer questions about student life, anything like that, as well as just get to see campus at its peak. So that's something that you can kick off your tour. We offer those Friday. This year we've been having, I think, six different information sessions and tours every day through the admissions office. There are certainly others available across campus, and that's a great way to get started.

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So after your campus tour, you hopefully will have a little bit better sense of kind of where things are on campus. Obviously, we have a mobile app which can be really helpful, and there's always a game weekend guide; definitely recommend that if you're coming to campus, you check out the schedule before you get here. You can do that on gameday.Nd.Edu. There will be printed brochures as well. One of the things that I always really loved, and when Admissions was located in Main Building, it was right outside our door was "Trumpets under the Dome."

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So this year we're doing it outside, which has been really unique. But if you can imagine it's the trumpet section from the Notre Dame marching band, they'll come together, they'll play a couple of songs. I always love to hear this fight song on a Friday because it really kind of sets the mood, hopefully for victory for the weekend. And then after the trumpets are done playing some Notre Dame favorite songs, they'll actually march out, so they'll step off from in front of the dome and kind of take you on over to other fun that'll be coming just a little bit later on Friday.

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So next thing I recommend would be going to the pep rally. Depending on when you're here, they move around a little bit, but it's a great opportunity to see the cheerleaders, to see the football team, hear from Brian Kelly. Often some of the players will speak. There's usually a special guest, there might be other student performances, and you'll see our current students wearing their dorm gear. So lots of pride at Notre Dame, not just kind of for the university as a whole, but also for the dorms, so lots of fun to be had at the pep rally, and that'll kind of set the tone. But there is one other event on Friday. Zach, do you want to talk about kind of the last Friday event, maybe or first Saturday event, depending on how we look at it?

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I was going to say technically, it's the very first thing Saturday. It's a great way to start off your football Saturday. So the pep rally is usually about five o'clock, you know, runs into you, maybe go get dinner afterwards and they have a few hours to just be around, get yourself settled hotel rooms or anywhere else that you might be staying, and then you come back to campus for our Midnight Drummer's Circle. So the drum line from the marching band comes and they just for 45 minutes to an hour, they just go and have some fun with the drums.

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They play recognizable songs. They just get everyone really amped up and hyped up. It's a lot of fun, just they have a great time with it. It's something that you should absolutely go see at least once while you're here at the university. So certainly, the Midnight Drummer Circle is a great way to get your Saturday started. Once you do that, you know you're all wound up, you know, get back and get some sleep and then start off Saturday, right by getting out early and experiencing everything that's on Saturday.

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Yeah, so lots of different things to do. One of your first questions, though, might be food. So if you see different concession stands set up throughout campus, those are hosted by different student groups. If you choose to buy from them, the money that you're paying goes to support the programming that those groups do. There's also a little bit of a kind of cult following, almost, for the Knights of Columbus Steak Sandwich. So if you want like a really great grilled steak sandwich, highly recommend that.

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But a lot of folks will go to tailgates as well, so sometimes those are hosted by alumni or by family members. They can also be hosted by departments on campus. I have been really enjoying this year seeing some of the cool things happening at department tailgates. So one of the departments hosted. A falconer, so there was a live falcon and falcon demonstrations. We have sword smithing that'll be happening at tailgates, all sorts of just kind of fun opportunities if you are interested in eating good food and maybe learning about something and Zac, we'll talk a little bit more about some of the other ways you can kind of nurture your mind during the football weekend if that interests you.

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Yeah, absolutely. I do want to just give a shout out to tailgating at Notre Dame. It is a little bit different than you're going to find anywhere else, just because of the parking lots are all right next to the stadium; the entire parking lot is overflowing with Notre Dame fans and it's also a very welcoming environment for, you know, people are coming in for maybe who support the opposing team. I know that when we hosted the University of Georgia a few years ago, the Georgia fans were so amazed by our hospitality that when we played them at Georgia the next year, I mean, they were just loving bringing us down and showing that same hospitality back.

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So it's just a great time. But absolutely outside of that, there are so many academic things going on as well. Many different departments host series and lectures based on, you know, their individual department. One of the very popular ones is called "Saturday with the Saints." It's hosted by the Department of Theology, as well as the McGrath Institute for Church Life, and they basically highlight, you know, a saint from Catholic history who showed these just great characteristics and these this wonderful virtue, and they give it more of a lecture about that saint and how they're relevant for today's world.

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So that's just one of the examples, departments all across campus have this. I know different colleges have these as well, like the College of Arts and Letters. And so it's a great way to also start your Saturday morning off thriving in the intellectual environment at Notre Dame.

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But as we move into the afternoon, that's when we start getting a little bit more football focus. It kicks off kind of with the player walk. So there's the Notre Dame football team will walk from their building on campus through the crowd past the library, down Library Quad, and you can give your favorite Notre Dame football player a high five, you can give Brian Kelly a high five, and they walk into the stadium and it's always filled with great fanfare.

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Yeah. So also kind of by the library is the Glee Club performance. The Glee Club is an all men's a cappella group on campus, they do some really amazing kind of performances, so if you've ever wanted to hear the Glee Club, they do that each football weekend. Again, if you happen to be a really big fan of the marching band, we really love our marching band, they are the oldest collegiate marching band in the country. You can check out the "Concert on the Steps," so that happens over on Bond Quad, which is so named for Bond Hall.

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Once upon a time, it was the university library, it's been our architecture building, but it currently houses the Center for University Advising. It's a beautiful kind of marble building. So much more classical style than you'll traditionally see at Notre Dame gives it kind of a distinctive look. And the marching band will fill the steps and also usually give a little teaser of what they'll be playing at halftime, as well as, again, those classic Notre Dame favorites. So those are some of my favorite kind of pre-game traditions. I also would definitely encourage you to make sure that you get into the Notre Dame Football Stadium in time to see some of the pre-game that happens in the stadium as well.

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So make sure you check your ticket if you have tickets to the game to see what time kickoff is so that you can get into the stadium early enough to just see what happens beforehand. Sometimes there's a fly over, the marching band's always doing some performances, it's really exciting to see the players take the field, not just head to the stadium. So one more thing before I let Zach talk about what happens during the games, I will note that the dorms also often kind of have their own unique traditions for before football games. The first home game tends to have the most.

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One of my personal favorites is done by St. Edward's Hall, which is one of our men's dorms, and they have a pool party in the reflecting pool in front of the library. Now, if you've ever been to the library, it's our building that has what we refer to affectionately as Touchdown Jesus on it. The reflecting pool is about a foot and a half deep, and that water is actually dyed blue for the best reflection. So if you can imagine a whole group of college guys with floaties, inflatable flamingos and unicorns just having a pool party and a foot and a half of water that is very much dyed blue, you kind of get a sense for the fun and the silliness that happens on campus.

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So definitely, if you're walking around campus in the mornings, just kind of keep your eyes out before you go into the game to see what fun the students are having. But Zach, do you want to talk about some of the really fun things that happen during the football game?

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Absolutely. There are so many great opportunities going throughout the football game, there are, of course, student chants and cheers that go with various band songs or just, you know, any percussion and the kind of runs the band is doing in between plays. After Notre Dame scores a touchdown and the extra point comes through, there are student section push ups, so like six people grab their nearest random start, throwing them up in the air for the cumulative amount of points that are at impasse, so some of those games when their offense is clicking very well and you were putting up forty five point someone's going up in the air forty five times, you know, in addition to all of the push ups that were done, you know, before that point after all the touchdowns that got us there.

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So it's a lot of fun. If you are the small one in your friend group, just prepare. It's going to happen to you. You're going to go up, probably at some point. But it's a really fun, fun thing that the students actions do, and it's really great to watch it from outside the student section. Just see all the push ups being done. Obviously, the band has a lot of other great things with the halftime show, as is always a lot of fun. And also, of course, they play the greatest of all university fight songs, the Notre Dame Victory March. And so it's a lot of a lot of very exciting things that are happening throughout the game between plays keeping the fans involved.

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Absolutely just a very vibrant game atmosphere, no matter what else is going on on the field. Obviously, at Notre Dame, we're always hoping that they're usually winning, but it's always a great time, you know, in the student section, just enjoying the atmosphere and being a part of that great division one energy. Maria, after the game, what are some other things that people should be looking at?

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So Zach already mentioned the victory march, hopefully, will playing that at the end of the game. But regardless of whether Notre Dame wins or loses, the marching band will always play the alma mater. And that's a really special moment for all Notre Dame students and all Notre Dame alumni. So you'll see students and alumni link arms sway together and sing the alma mater. So really just kind of an amazing moment. We don't just do it at football games, it's a really amazing moment when you graduate, and something that continues to really, I think, be a great kind of unifying piece of the Notre Dame experience.

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So definitely look out for the alma mater. I can warn you that if you have parked on campus or nearby, traffic takes a little while, so enjoy the alma mater. After the game, our students will usually head to what we affectionately refer to as candlelight dinner, so the dining hall staff pull out the white tablecloth, there are candles, usually, the food's a little bit kind of fancier than normal, so maybe some nice desserts, every so often there's carving stations, just really a good, a good meal to be had in the dining hall, so our students enjoy that.

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But if you're thinking about, "What can I do to wait out traffic?", there is mass after the game. So the Basilica is usually one of those locations, we've also been using our DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. If you want to experience mass on campus, that can be a really great way to do it. Really, obviously meaningful, unique. You'll get a little reminder on the video board during the game, and you'll hear the students cheering for Father Pete.

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He is a very beloved priest on campus. So when you think about things that are really unique at Notre Dame, the fact that we were founded by the Holy Cross is one of those pieces, but also I think the love that we have for the priests and other religious figures on campus as unique as well. So that probably is kind of the best way to end your weekend at Notre Dame. But before Zach and I kind of say goodbye for this episode. Zach, any favorite game weekend traditions that we haven't talked about any favorite moments or just advice for visitors, maybe coming for their first Notre Dame football game?

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Yeah, absolutely. One thing that we haven't talked about, and this is because there's not one perfect time to do this, but any time you go is perfect is to swing by the Grotto. Go light a candle. It will absolutely be overflowing because everyone's just asking for a little bit of extra help for the Notre Dame football games. Absolutely stopped by the grotto. Whether it's the very first thing you do on campus or the very last thing before you leave, it's always still going to be a quiet place of reflection, but also just to share in that communal spirit and communal energy.

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But absolutely, you know, the Grotto is certainly one of the places not to miss on campus, and I think usually I would go after the football game, you know, a couple of hours after campus had kind of calmed down a little bit and most people have cleared out. You can go back to the Grotto and just see, you know, a physical embodiment of the Notre Dame family right there in the Grotto with all of the candles. Maria, do you have anything?

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Yeah, that's a great one. I always remember that was usually kind of part of my Friday tradition, so definitely different times you can go. Something that I think is just great is to hopefully just take a little bit of time to kind of soak in Notre Dame, whether you're walking. Going across God Quad in front of the dome, something I really liked to do, especially before I was a student, would be to go up into the library and look out the windows on some of the upper floors.

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So my favorite view was the one that faced towards the Dome and the Basilica. There's also a really great view of the stadium, so kind of unique to go into the Hesburgh library and just get a sense of kind of campus from above. I think those moments to kind of pause on campus and soak it all in are really great.

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If you are someone who is kind of intrigued by Notre Dame traditions, we obviously have had some other episodes on that, but we are going to dive a little bit more into Notre Dame's history next week, so if you want to tune in and learn more about Notre Dame history, that's coming up next. Thank you so much for joining us this week on College Bound, and we look forward to sharing more about Notre Dame with you soon.