

SOUTH BEND, IN – OCTOBER 23: Kyren Williams #23 of the Notre Dame Fighting Irish celebrates during ... [+] the game against the USC Trojans at Notre Dame Stadium on October 23, 2021 in South Bend, Indiana. (Photo by Michael Hickey/Getty Images)

Getty Images

Evidently, Kyren Williams lacks the eye-popping statistics needed to make a run at the Heisman Trophy.

Perhaps Notre Dame's redshirt sophomore running back isn't a viable candidate to win the Doak Walker Award as the nation's top running back. But leaving him off the list of 10 semifinalists announced this week?

That's just ridiculous.

According to the award's official criteria, which take into account more than mere numbers, Williams would seem like an ideal candidate.

Williams, for instance, "plays predominantly at the running back position and has made extraordinary contributions to his team."

Not just on offense, where the co-captain often lines up at slot receiver, but on special teams, where he has been the primary punt returner all year.

SOUTH BEND, IN – OCTOBER 30: Notre Dame Fighting Irish running back Kyren Williams (23) points down ... [+] field as he runs with the football during a game between the Notre Dame Fighting Irish and the North Carolina Tar Heels on October 30, 2021, at Notre Dame Stadium, in South Bend, IN. (Photo by Robin Alam/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images)

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Sticking with those criteria, Williams has given us no reason to doubt he is "enrolled in a degree program, is in good academic standing and is on schedule to graduate."

The St. Louis product also "holds a record of good citizenship within and beyond the athletic sphere," not to mention "exhibits the characteristics of sportsmanship and fair play."

Then there's leadership, perhaps the hardest to measure of the Walker Award criteria but no doubt a Williams strength.

“Honestly, that’s who he is as a person,” Notre Dame quarterback Jack Coan said after Williams’ career-best 199-yard rushing night against North Carolina. “Since I got here, just energy all the time. It’s been unbelievable.”

Coan’s soft-spoken nature might have left a void on the Irish offense if not for Williams’ ability to step up and fill it. And when safety Kyle Hamilton, the team’s junior All-America candidate, went down with a knee injury on Oct. 23 against USC, it was Williams who took up the slack for that unit as well.

“Obviously Kyle being out affects a lot on the defense,” Williams said. “I really don’t know much about defense. I just try to encourage the players. I always talk to the guys. I’m always around there, just talking.”

That vibe extends to the practice field, where Williams makes sure he brings it in 1-on-1 drills and makes “game-like” moves in team sessions, all with an eye toward preparing Irish defenders for Saturday’s challenge.

His intensity in blitz pickup is the same in a Tuesday practice as it is when the lights go on at Notre Dame Stadium.

“I don’t care what you play: special teams, defense, offense,” Williams said. “I’m always going to talk to our teammates. I’m always just trying to lead them. In team periods, I’ll tell (linebacker JD Bertrand), ‘Let’s work this.’ I’ll tell (senior safety Houston Griffith), ‘Let’s work this.’ There’s a lot of things that we do in practice that we both try to get better on.”

SOUTH BEND, IN – SEPTEMBER 18: Notre Dame Fighting Irish running back Kyren Williams (23) celebrates ... [+] with teammates after scoring a touchdown during a game between the Notre Dame Fighting Irish and the Purdue Boilermakers on September 18, 2021, at Notre Dame Stadium, in South Bend, In (Photo by Robin Alam/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images)

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Heading into the final two games of the regular season, starting with Saturday afternoon’s Senior Day against Georgia Tech, Williams needs 135 rushing yards to reach 1,000 for the second straight season.

His 91-yard touchdown run against North Carolina on Oct. 30, in which he reversed field and unleashed the stiff-arm of the year before motoring down the left sideline, put all the best of Williams’ traits on display.

Creativity. Determination. Dramatic flair.

“I couldn’t believe it,” Coan said. “That was one of the best runs I’ve seen in person. You know on the field he’s never going to be denied. He’s just an amazing competitor.”

Williams leads the team with 13 touchdowns (10 rushing, three receiving) and his 1,330 all-purpose yards rank 13th among all running backs at the FBS level.

Of course, it's about far more than numbers with Williams. Always has been.

Too bad the Doak Walker Award selection committee couldn't see that.

Source: [Kyren Williams' Notre Dame Contributions Go Far Beyond The Box Score](#)