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MIAMI (AP) -- Notre Dame tailbacks Theo Riddick and Cierre Wood showed how interchangeable they are in the final two games of the regular season for the Fighting Irish.

Game 11 against Wake Forest, Wood ran for 150 yards, while Riddick had 20.

Game 12 against USC, it was Riddick running for 146 yards, and Wood for 20.

And so has been the theme for the Irish this season: Two running backs - and sometimes three - are better than one. That approach has served Notre Dame pretty much since training camp, and the top-ranked Irish (12-0) are hoping it holds true once Monday night when they face No. 2 Alabama (12-1) in the BCS title game.

Riddick has run for 880 yards and five touchdowns this season, Wood 740 yards and four scores, and George Atkinson III - who got only 51 carries, compared with 180 for Riddick and

110 for Wood - added five touchdowns and 7.1 yards per carry.

"We try to utilize all their strengths," Notre Dame offensive coordinator Chuck Martin said. "The truth be told, they all could be a feature back, they all could do all the things. Everybody is like, `He plays more, what's wrong with him?' There's nothing wrong with any of the three. We'd like to get George 20 carries a game but there's one football."

Notre Dame was unranked to start the year, which means not many - well, very few - people thought the Irish would be in the national title game against the reigning champion Crimson Tide.

Among those who thought the Irish would play in the season's last game: Riddick, Wood and Atkinson.

"We've had RB meetings where we talk about what we want to do and what we all want to accomplish," Wood said. "In the beginning of the season, what we said normally was, `We want to win them all.' That was word-for-word what we said. We want to win them all. And up to this point, we have. So we took that upon ourselves. We think we're one of the more skilled groups on the whole team. That's just how we go about our business."

Martin was asked in the days leading up to the BCS title game to describe all three backs in rapid-fire style. His responses:

On Riddick, "pound for pound as good a football player as they make."

On Wood, "as explosive a player as they make."

On Atkinson, "really explosive athlete."

Notice any trends there? The Irish love their backs, and Alabama is raving about what they see from them all as well.

"Riddick is probably quicker than the other two," Alabama defensive coordinator Kirby Smart said. "Great one-step quickness, the ability to make you miss, good stiff arm. Didn't think a former receiver would run with that much power, but he does run with power. They're really good backs."

Riddick came to Notre Dame as a running back, then primarily played wide receiver for two years and returned to the backfield this season. He said he never complained, said he never wondered which position better suited him.

Whatever it took to win was fine with him, Riddick said.

"What can I say? I feel like I'm at ease," Riddick said. "Everything slows down tremendously and I think it's just helped me."

Ask anyone on the Notre Dame offensive line how Riddick has handled his return to running back, and they'll say they believe he's hitting his best stride at the perfect time.

That being, title game.

"He's been unbelievable," offensive lineman Zack Martin said. "Especially in the last three or four games of the season, he's been great. To have a guy like that behind you, he's fun to block for."

That probably can be said for Wood and Atkinson as well.

"It's a credit to all three of them that they've stuck with it and prepared hard every week, and some weeks they've gotten more touches, but that's the nature of the beast," said Chuck Martin, the offensive coordinator. "But we're very fortunate to have three very talented kids at that position."