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SIGN OF THINGS TO COME

Photo Illustration by Suzanna Pratt and Brandon Keeloean
2012 momentum carries into 2013

By ANDREW OWENS
Assistant Managing Editor

Irish coach Brian Kelly arrived at the Signing Day press conference looking relaxed after a tumultuous month that included a blowout loss to Alabama, a flirtation with the Philadelphia Eagles and the Manti Te’o controversy.

But Wednesday was a cause for celebration for Kelly and his staff as they finalized a stellar 24-man recruiting haul that spanned the country and resulted in a consensus top-five finish for the Irish.

“It’s an exciting day at Notre Dame, and it’s exciting because it’s centered upon our future,” Kelly said. “I think we all know ... that after the last game you play, you want to begin taking that next step forward, and for us, taking that next step forward is to continue to build our football program within and developing football players, so when they get back on that field in 2013, we finish it.”

Three of the five-star jewels of the class will fill needed positions for the Irish: linebacker Jaylon Smith, safety Max Redfield and running back Greg Bryant. While nearly all of the class had verbally committed prior to the start of the 12-1 season, Kelly said the successful season aided the recruiting process.

“I think it’s crucial,” said Kelly of the team’s success. “I think you have to have both to be able to get the players like a Greg Bryant. It can’t just be on academics. We don’t want them coming to Notre Dame just because of academics. We want the whole piece. And this was an indication that 12 wins definitely helps you in that process with a Greg Bryant.

“You know, we had 19 commited before the season started, and the guys that we got late, I think winning definitely had something to do with that.”

Redfield, originally a USC commit, and defensive-line recruit Eddie Vanderdoes give the Irish more five-star commitments from California than any other school.

Vanderdoes faxed his Letter of Intent to Notre Dame just before 8 p.m. Wednesday and announced his decision minutes later at a press conference.

Whereas last year’s class experienced late defections, the 2013 haul endured little adversity, with the exception of lineman Alex Anzalone’s January decommitment.

“I think what we did this year is that we made sure where that commitment was,” Kelly said. “In other words, if you’re committed, that means you’ve ended this recruiting process. And I think in some instances, being firmer toward that end allowed this not to take shape.

“Now, I’m going to tell you, there are some great players. There are some who happen every year, and I think you have to be prepared for that, too.”

Kelly said one of the key components of the class’ camaraderie was Smith, a Fort Wayne, Ind., product and the state’s top-rated player.

“I think leadership takes different forms, and he can be a leader just by his own actions, the way he handles himself,” Kelly said. “He’ll look you in the eye. I think those are all leadership qualities, as well. Do I think he’s going to come in and be the vocal leader like [former Irish linebacker Manti Te’o] was on the field? No, I don’t think so. But his actions and the way that he prepares himself and the way he plays the game, I think a lot of people will want to model after him.”

With the 24 additions to the roster, Kelly said Notre Dame’s depth is the best at any point during his three-year tenure.

“With this class, it really addresses some of our depth needs across the board,” he said. “We played the national championship game under 85 scholarships. We did not have 85 scholarship players at that time. We had some depth issues. And I think we’ve addressed those depth issues across the board in year three.”
As one of five early enrollees this semester, Malik Zaire has taken the first step in his development as an Irish quarterback. Expectations for the left-handed quarterback likely include him following in the footsteps of Andrew Hendrix, Everett Golson and Gunner Kiel and redshirting in his first season. Zaire is a true dual-threat quarterback who operated a spread-option offense in high school.

While some quarterbacks may seek rushing yards at the first sign of trouble, Zaire used his mobility to hide in time to continue to read coverages until a receiver broke open. On the relatively few occasions he was asked to throw, he displayed accuracy on deep, downfield throws. The majority of his rushing attempts came on designed run plays or read options, which were similar to his rushing attempts, with more momentum than he had going into it. He can string out plays and beat other players to the edge, or at a moment’s notice decisively drive into a hole, where he does not shy away from contact.

With his elite quickness and skills both running and receiving the football, Folston should join upperclassmen like Amir Carlisle for carries this fall. And as fast as Folston is, he’s even quicker in his cuts. Where other shifty players may “jump cut” around would-be tacklers, Folston drives into every move, coming out of a cut with more momentum than he had going into it. He can string out plays and beat other players to the edge, or at a moment’s notice decisively drive into a hole, where he does not shy away from contact.

With his elite quickness and skills both running and receiving the football, Folston should join upperclassmen like George Atkinson III and Davonte’Neal as versatile, explosive weapons in the Irish offense. Tarean Folston is the faster of Notre Dame’s two running back recruits from the Sunshine State, and his 4.48-second speed in the 40-yard dash will be an asset in the Irish spread running game. And as fast as Folston is, he’s even quicker in his cuts. Where other shifty players may “jump cut” around would-be tacklers, Folston drives into every move, coming out of a cut with more momentum than he had going into it. He can string out plays and beat other players to the edge, or at a moment’s notice decisively drive into a hole, where he does not shy away from contact.

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Tori Hunter Jr.  
**RECEIVER**  
6’0” • 172  
Prosper High School  
Prosper, Texas

Tori Hunter, Jr. seems to have inherited his father’s Gold Glove-caliber hands along with his name. The wide receiver out of Prosper (Texas) High School can make just about any catch, whether he’s stuck in traffic or wide open in the end zone. Once he gets the ball in his hands he’s adept at finding the gaps and outrunning his opponents, but he doesn’t shy away from contact — although primarily an offensive player, his high school highlights include a bone-jarring tackle.

Hunter committed to Notre Dame in September, but it might be a while before Irish fans get to see him in action. He suffered a gruesome broken leg a month ago during one-on-one drills before the Army All-American bowl and still has five to seven months of recovery before he can play again.

Gabe Hauk/The Courier

**COLIN MCGOVERN**  
**OFFENSIVE LINEMAN**  
6’6” • 314  
Barron Collier High School  
New Lenox, III.

One of the most sought-after prospects in the Midwest, Colin McGovern chose Notre Dame over a number of Big Ten programs, including Michigan, Ohio State and Nebraska.

At 6-foot-6 and 291 pounds, McGovern has a good frame for a lineman and also moves well for the position. He jumps off the line of scrimmage very well and is able to make plays in open space. McGovern also displays solid technique in run protection and in pass protection, an area where many high school linemen struggle. McGovern saw most of his playing time at left tackle but can also play on the inside and is projected to be either a center or guard.

McGovern still has room to add weight but has the tools necessary to earn playing time earlier than most linemen typically do.

Luke Mork/The Courier

**MIKE HEUERMAN**  
**TIGHT END**  
6’4” • 228  
Barren Collier High School  
Naples, Fla.

Brian Kelly and the Irish managed to snag tight end Mike Heuerman from the clutches of Urban Meyer and Ohio State. The four-star tight end from Barren Collier High School in Naples, Fla., cited tradition and the campus community as reasons for choosing Notre Dame over Ohio State, LSU and several other schools.

Heuerman stands 6-foot-4 and weighs 220 pounds. He is already a talented and dominant blocker with the potential to do even more damage on the outside once he fills out his tall frame. He plays smart and adjusts quickly when blocking.

Heuerman also runs a swift 4.69-second 40-yard dash. That speed coupled with his height will make him a big challenge to cover and a formidable receiving threat.

Brendan Hall/ESPNBoston.com

**HUNTER BIVIN**  
**OFFENSIVE LINEMAN**  
6’6” • 290  
Apollo High School  
Owensboro, Ky.

Ranked as one of the top tackles in the country, Hunter Bivin committed to Notre Dame in March, selecting the Irish over Florida, Ohio State and Oklahoma, among others.

With his 6-foot-6, 290-pound frame, Bivin has the ability to overpower his opponents with raw strength. Although he struggles with his footwork at times, he displayed good agility and technique at the Under Armour All-American Bowl in January. Bivin largely lined up as a left tackle in high school but demonstrated the ability to play different positions on the line. He even saw some snaps at center, a rarity for a player of his size. Bivin projects to play inside at Notre Dame.

Bivin still needs to put on more weight and strength, but he could find himself in mop-up duty as early as next season.

Brendan Hall/ESPNBoston.com

**DOUG RANDOLPH**  
**LINEBACKER**  
6’3” • 221  
Woodberry Forest High School  
Woodberry Forest, Va.

A four-star recruit from Virginia, outside linebacker Doug Randolph’s game centers on his strength and athleticism. He is a quick, resilient pass rusher whose agility allows him to maneuver in between offensive linemen in pursuit of the quarterback.

Randolph plays hard from whistle to whistle, bursting off the line at the snap and not stopping until he takes down the ball carrier. With his strength, Randolph often pushes through blocks and double teams, capitalizing on the play with a tackle for loss.

Randolph also spent time on the other side of the ball as a tight end. Aided by his powerful build and steady hands, Randolph is most effective with mid-to-long-range passes and as an alert blocker for his backs.

Kevin Liles/Notre Dame Athletics

**DEVIN BUTLER**  
**CORNERBACK**  
6’1” • 179  
Gonzaga College High School  
Washington, D.C.

Devin Butler is a four-star recruit from Gonzaga High School in Washington D.C.

Butler will play cornerback at Notre Dame, though he saw time as a receiver in high school. Butler is an instinctive player with great closing speed and lots of range.

He is speedy and can track down receivers or runners across the field. Butler provides solid, smart and awareness while displaying the ability to make open field tackles against the run.

He reads passports well and gets a jump on the ball, and once he gets a jump on the ball, he has the ability to elevate and the hands to bring the ball in.

Brendan Hall/ESPNBoston.com

**COLIN MCGOVERN**  
**OFFENSIVE LINEMAN**  
6’6” • 291  
Apollo High School  
Owensboro, Ky.

The 6-foot-5, 314-pound Montelus is ranked by ESPN as the best player in Massachusetts. Montelus projects as a strong offensive lineman with solid upper body strength, quick feet and long arms. Montelus likely has the requisite size to stick at his high school position of offensive tackle, but he could also play guard given his mobility.

Montelus has the explosiveness to get downfield and punish linemen and defensive backs with his powerful running block. The lineman also has the lateral agility to hang tough in pass protection as the pocket moves.

Montelus committed to Notre Dame on April 21 and later, during his senior season, led his squad to its third consecutive Division 1A state championship with a 20-19 victory at Gillette Stadium, the home of the New England Patriots.

Brendan Hall/ESPNBoston.com

**HUNTER BIVIN**  
**OFFENSIVE LINEMAN**  
6’6” • 314  
Everett High School  
Everett, Mass.

The 6-foot-5, 314-pound Montelus is ranked by ESPN as the best player in Massachusetts. Montelus projects as a strong offensive lineman with solid upper body strength, quick feet and long arms. Montelus likely has the requisite size to stick at his high school position of offensive tackle, but he could also play guard given his mobility.

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Brendan Hall/ESPNBoston.com

**WILL FULLER**  
**RECEIVER**  
6’1” • 170  
Roman Catholic High School  
Philadelphia

Will Fuller tore up the gridiron at Roman Catholic High School, located in Philadelphia. The 6-foot-1, 170-pound receiver and cornerback posted 46 receptions for 738 yards and scored 13 touchdowns in addition to the
three interceptions he had on the
defensive side of the ball in his senior year.

Fulmer also broke the city re-
cord for most receiving yards in a single
game, a mark that stood for over 40 years, when he
recorded 276 yards on 10 receptions.

After his impressive senior campaign, he was named first
team all-Catholic wide receiver and
defensive back, and he is the
top-ranked receiver in southeast
Pennsylvania.

Originally a Penn State com-
mitt, Fulmer switched his commit-
tment to Notre Dame in August
after the NCAA handed down its sanctions against Penn State.

With Fulmer, the Irish get a fast
and agile wide receiver who ex-
cels in the open field. Fulmer also
runs crisp routes and has good
hands.

JAMES ONWAULU
RECEIVER
6'1" • 203
Cretin-Derham Hall High School
Saint Paul, Minn.

Receiver James Onwualu
doesn’t break out of many tackles
— generally because defenders
can’t catch him in the first place.
The nimble Cretin-Derham Hall
product from Saint Paul, Minn.,
has made many of his opponents
look foolish over the years, tor-
menting them with fantastic foot
speed and outstanding lateral
movement.

Onwualu — who hails from
the same school as Michael Floyd
and Joe Mauer — carries the ball
with the momentum of a freight
train, staying cognizant of where
the defense is and where to go to
avoid it. Hesitation has no place
in his game; he can run his route,
turn for the catch and break for
the end zone, all without losing a
step. He received offers from
nearly every Big Ten school and
several Pac-12 programs in addi-
tion to Notre Dame.

Mike Mcglinchey
OFFENSIVE LINEMAN
6'6" • 285
William Penn Charter School
Philadelphia

McGlinchey, the cousin of NFL
quarterback Matt Ryan, will
provide the Irish with a unique
combination of size and strength
on the offensive line. With his
6-foot-6-inch frame, McGlinchey
towers over defensive linemen
but still has the agility and ath-
leticism to seal off blocks and
follow plays down field.

The Philadelphia prospect’s
combination of power and ex-
plosive ability off the ball will
allow him to contribute for the
Irish in the future, and his height
is a unique factor that will give
him an advantage even at the
career's young age.

Even in college, McGlinchey
produces damage on the field.

Michael Deeb
LINEBACKER
6'2" • 238
American Heritage High School
Plantation, Fla.

Although not one of the most
heralded recruits in the upcom-
ing class, Michael Deeb may
have the potential to be one of
the best players down the road.
Deeb lives up to his reputation
as a hard-nosed, intelligent in-
side linebacker, often blowing up
plays in the backfield with fer-
cious hits.

Rashad Kinlaw
CORNERBACK
6’0” • 180
Absegami High School
Galloway, N.J.

Rashad Kinlaw is listed as an
athlete by ESPN, but he projects
as a cornerstone at Notre Dame.

Coming off his high school ca-
reer as a dual threat quarterback,
Kinlaw provides Notre Dame
with several options at the next
level with his explosive speed
and versatility. His speed pro-
duces damage on the field.

At 6-feet and 180 pounds with
incredible agility, Kinlaw is ex-
tremely difficult to tackle in the
open field. He has proven to be a
very versatile player and profiles
nicely as a cornerstone given his
speed and mechanics.

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Thursday, february 7, 2013

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Recruits adopt ‘Mob’ mentality

By CHRIS ALLEN
Sports Editor

The 24 incoming players who make up the Irish class of 2013 hail from as far east as Massachusetts and as far west as California.

But despite being separated by distance, the group has been united for months under one defining moniker.

“The ‘Irish Mob,’” cornerback Devin Butler, who signed Wednesday, said. “It started way back when it was only 11 commits. I was just talking to [quarterback] Malik Zaire and [wide receiver] James Onwualu about how we ‘mob,’ slang for like playing well. They both said, ‘We are the Irish Mob,’ and we ran with it.

“It helps to keep us close because it’s just a way to unite us and keep us all together without being together.”

Though it started off as a moniker, the “Irish Mob” became a movement that brought together arguably the best recruiting class in recent Notre Dame history.

Through the use of the hashtag #Irishmob13 on Twitter, natural leaders Onwualu, Butler and offensive lineman Steve Elmer were able to bring new and talented recruits to play for the Irish.

Irish recruiting analyst Mike Frank said the group is already showing the ability to lead at a young age.

“The closeness of the group has a huge impact,” he said. “That’s your future leadership at some point. Having those guys so close and having them get along with each other, it’s good because when the game’s on the line they don’t want to let their brother down. That’s where it really comes into play.”

As the 2012 Irish continued to pile up wins on the field, the “Irish Mob” continued to grow off it. The class gained momentum from the commitments of five-star caliber players in running back Greg Bryant and safety Max Redfield in the weeks and days leading up to the BCS National Championship Game on Jan. 7.

Frank said a distinguishing factor of the group was its willingness to compete against players who play the same position. Bryant, running back Tarean Folston and tight end Durham Smythe all joined the “Mob” late despite facing crowded position battles.

“The way this class operates is, we’re all here to compete and we’re all here to play, but whatever is going to make the team better is what we need,” Frank said. “It’s a kind of unselfishness. I’m really excited to see that.”

The unity of the “Mob” was tested on Jan. 10 as highly-regarded linebacker Alex Anzalone, scheduled to enroll early at Notre Dame, de-committed to enroll early at Florida.

The Irish recruits reacted in an uproar at Anzalone, heavily criticizing his decision. Frank said the fire with which the players reacted is a sign of future team unity.

“When Alex Anzalone decommitted, a lot of guys that he knew felt pretty betrayed by that. That was encouraging to see, they took that very personally,” Frank said. “That to me was a good sign that you’ve got the right kind of guys coming in this class, the right kind of mentality that you’re looking for. Guys that take this seriously, personally and want to be part of not just a team but a family-type atmosphere. They took that as a discredit against the family almost, which I thought was a really encouraging sign.”

Through the work of Zaire, Onwualu, Butler and others, it has become clear that fall camp will be more than just an assembly of new faces — it will be the reunion of a family.

“A family called the ‘Irish Mob.’”

Contact Chris Allen at callen10@nd.edu

Cornerback Devin Butler, a signee in Notre Dame’s 2013 class, was one of the creators of the “Irish Mob.” Notre Dame signed 24 players Wednesday.
Expert lauds incoming recruiting class

By CHRIS ALLEN
Sports Editor

Notre Dame built on its landmark 2012 season Wednesday as it received the National Letters of Intent for 24 recruits making up its 2013 recruiting class. The group includes nine members of the elite ESPN 150 and is ranked as the No. 4 class in the country by ESPN, trailing only Florida, Ohio State and Alabama.

Irish recruiting expert Mike Frank lauded the Notre Dame coaching staff for its efforts in landing its best class in recent memory.

“My overall opinion is I think it’s a very, very good class. I think they filled their needs at almost every position with maybe a few exceptions,” said Frank, who runs the ESPN-affiliated Irish Sports Daily.

“I love the talent in this class. They did a great job getting some talented guys, some guys who can come in and help right away, which is important. There are some guys who can match talent with the very best teams in the country. You’re starting to land the kind of players that Alabama can get, and when you do that you’re really raising the talent level in the program.”

Headlining the class is linebacker Jaylon Smith, who will come to campus as the most-hyped player in the 2013 class by espn, trailblazing the Irish in the nation as the No. 4 prospect nationally.

“I think he’ll have a similar impact to what (former Notre Dame linebacker) Manti Te’o did. When you talk about him as a person, he’s just a truly great kid,” Frank said. “He’s got his head screwed on straight, he’s extremely well-liked and he cares about his community. When you talk about talent, people find this hard to believe but I think Jaylon has more talent than Manti Te’o ever had. He’s easily just as big as Manti but he’s quicker and faster.”

Smith is not the only blue-chip prospect to join the Irish defensive unit next fall. Notre Dame received a late signing from No. 10 overall prospect Eddie Vanderdoes, the nation’s top defensive tackle. Vanderdoes projects to be able to play any position on the defensive line in Notre Dame’s 3-4 defense. Frank said Vanderdoes, who was once committed to USC but warming up to the Irish after the 12-0 regular season in 2012, is a prospect of top caliber.

Jaylon Smith is a great player, but to me Eddie Vanderdoes is just the crown jewel of this class,” Frank said. “I know a guy from out where Eddie is from in California who has been covering recruiting out there and he said Eddie is the best guy he’s seen at his position in 10 or 15 years… I’m really thrilled, to be honest.”

Joining Smith and Vanderdoes in the front seven next fall are a quartet of physical prospects. ESPN 150 outside linebacker Doug Randolph, inside linebacker Michael Deeb, defensive end Jacob Matuska and ESPN 150 defensive end Isaac Rochell will all suit up for defensive coordinator Bob Diaco’s vaunted unit next season.

After spending the 2012 season with a number of converted players from other positions in the secondary due to recruiting defections and injuries, the Notre Dame staff will be happy to welcome a star group of four natural defensive backs to campus in the fall. Highly sought-after safety and former USC commit Max Redfield from Mission Viejo, Calif., is the centerpiece of a group that includes a trio of cornerbacks — Cole Lake, Devin Butler and Rashad Kinlaw.

“You’re welcoming just a bunch of good players in the secondary. I think Max Redfield is a tremendous player,” Frank said. “He allows you to do a lot of things defensively. Notre Dame likes to play with a single safety playing up high in some situations and he also loves you to do that. In order to do that you need a guy who can run and run well, and also be physical back there. He can do that. He’s a big safety prospect. They can do things with coverage and confuse opposing quarterbacks.”

On the offensive side of the ball, the immediate impact from the 2013 class could come from the star-studded backfield. A pair of ESPN 150 running backs from Florida will compete to line up in the Irish backfield next season to replace departed backs Theo Riddick and Cierre Wood. Frank said both players have the talent to contribute right away.

“I love the two running backs in this class. Greg Bryant’s got as much or more talent than any back they’ve signed in quite some time,” he said. “I’ll say the same for Tarean Folston, he’s got a tremendous amount of talent and potential. He just needs to get a little bit bigger and a little bit stronger, but once he does, he’s a guy who can hit the home run and get some big plays. That’s something Notre Dame has been missing for a while of the running back position for a long time.”

Bryant or Folston may one day line up behind the latest dual-threat quarterback to hit Notre Dame’s campus. Four-star quarterback Malik Zaire brings electricity to the signal-caller spot and, Frank said, possesses some similarities to junior quarterback Everett Golson.

“I think he’s quicker than Everett and maybe a little bit faster in terms of top-end speed. Where Malik is really going to shine is I think he’s a great projected leader. People really gravitate to him, his mentality is one where he can become a great leader for this team.”

Rounding out the offensive class are great numbers at the receiver, tight end and offensive line positions. Though Notre Dame did not ink a five-star prospect at these spots, they will welcome great depth in signing five offensive linemen, four receivers and two tight ends to the 2013 roster.

A pair of famous names will line up at wideout, as among the Irish signees are Corey Robinson and Torii Hunter Jr., sons of Hall of Fame baseball center David Robinson and current Detroit Tigers outfielder Torii Hunter, respectively.

Frank said he is particularly impressed with the group of linemen signed to compete under coach Harry Hiestand in the trenches.

“I think they got five guys who can really pan out and become great players for Notre Dame,” Frank said. “It wouldn’t surprise me if all five end up starting at some point down the road.”

Now that the curtain has fallen on the 2013 recruiting season, Frank said the class of 24 recruits showed Notre Dame’s continued momentum to the top of college football.

“It’s great to see Notre Dame competing with Alabama for some of the top guys and top classes in the country. I think the next step for Brian Kelly and his staff is to capitalize on the 2012 season in recruiting into the 2014 stretch. They need to get a few more of the five-star guys, guys like Max Redfield, Greg Bryant, Jaylon Smith, those are the difference-makers. Those are the people who make the key plays in the game that decide the outcome of the game. What’s really the difference is if you get a couple more guys who are five-star type players… you have a chance to hang with anybody.”

For more on Notre Dame recruiting, check out Mike Frank’s Irishsportsdaily.com.

Email Mike at mikefrank10@skyglobal.net and tell him The Observer sent you.

Contact Chris Allen at calten10@nd.edu
Thursday, February 7th | 8:15pm
Coleman Morse Lounge
Refreshments will be provided

Lou Nanni
vice president for University Relations

Louis M. Nanni is the vice president for University Relations at the University of Notre Dame. In this role, he oversees the University’s efforts in development, advisory councils, special events and the Notre Dame Alumni Association. Mr. Nanni graduated from Notre Dame in 1984 with a bachelor’s degree in government and the Program of Liberal Studies.

The Last Lecture Series is an opportunity for some of the most dynamic and entertaining professors at Notre Dame to share with students their life lessons and experiences and to extol what we really need to know in life.

The Origin of the Series: Just a month after receiving a prognosis that his pancreatic cancer was terminal, Randy Pausch delivered his “last lecture” entitled Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams at Carnegie Mellon University. Shortly after the lecture, a book entitled The Last Lecture was released based on Pausch’s speech, which became a New York Times best seller. The book brought about great publicity to the concept of a last lecture.