

## Recruiting Dilemma: Defensive Line

Written by Brian Smith  
Thursday, 13 December 2012 09:13

---

Evaluating the last recruiting class combined with this recruiting class, I am somewhat concerned about DL numbers moving forward. How should Notre Dame proceed?

With only three, possibly four scholarships left to award to recruits, defensive line recruiting sits in a precarious position, or does it? Should Notre Dame go after at least one more defensive line recruit this year? Two? You be the judge.

### 2012

**Sheldon Day** – An immediate contributor, Day appears to be in line for increased minutes come 2013. He might be **Kapron Lewis-Moore's** replacement within the starting lineup. Day will one day don an NFL uniform.

**Jarron Jones** – The “big” unknown. Will Jones stay on defense, or will he end up on the offensive line? He appears to be athletic enough to play defensive line, but since he did not play this season it's impossible to truly know.

**Romeo Okwara** – Started out at linebacker. I believe he's destined for defensive end. His length and quickness could make him a terror off the edge. Will Okwara accept the position switch, if asked to move?

### 2013

**Jacob Matuska** – A player utilized more as a tight end than defensive end during his high school career, Matuska appears to be a good athlete that Notre Dame plans to develop. He's far from a sure thing, but Notre Dame head coach **Brian Kelly** already proved a track record of recruiting players such as Matuska and helping them develop into very good college football players (Kelly actually recruited now NFL star

**JJ Watt**

## Recruiting Dilemma: Defensive Line

Written by Brian Smith

Thursday, 13 December 2012 09:13

---

to Central Michigan before he transferred to Wisconsin and became an All-American).

**Isaac Rochell** – One of the most physically gifted players Notre Dame signed during the past few years, Rochell continued to develop from last season through this season. He displayed improved speed and quickness, and he gained weight as well. This young man could be a star if he continues to develop.

### More Questions

How well will “Big Red” continue to develop? Of course that player would be **Tony Springmann**, the current redshirt freshman from the class of 2011. He showed flashes of being a really good player this season, but he did so with limited repetitions. Could he handle the number of snaps that a starter at nose guard would be required to make and still provide ample production?

Realistically, Notre Dame should expect **Stephon Tuitt** to leave Notre Dame a year early and enter the 2014 NFL Draft. Why? He’s going to be a high first round draft choice. While replacing him will be nearly impossible, which player(s) can help offset his production, especially his pass rushing prowess? My guess would be Okwara, but that’s a stretch for a guy that’s not played defensive end just yet.

Even with Okwara, that’s only five defensive linemen for two classes. Will five be good enough come 2014 and 2015 when those players become juniors and seniors? This question becomes really important considering how quickly one or possibly two injured players could set the Notre Dame defense back.

Beyond Day, will any of the current defensive line recruits be capable of rushing the passer with a high level of efficiency?

While no player will likely replace **Louis Nix** because his body type will rarely be duplicated

## Recruiting Dilemma: Defensive Line

Written by Brian Smith

Thursday, 13 December 2012 09:13

---

combined with his athleticism, which young player takes over (or at least contributes) at nose guard from the class of 2012 or 2013?

Would one more defensive lineman be good enough for the class of 2013? What about two?

### Possible Solutions

**Eddie Vanderdoes**, NG, 6-3, 300-pounds, Placer, CA – Quite possibly the best interior defensive line target for a 3-4 college defensive team, Vanderdoes went through in-home visits with Notre Dame last week and this week. Will the Irish be able to snatch him away from the West Coast? Hard sell with UCLA (Nov. 24), USC (Jan. 19), and most of the Pac 12 in pursuit.

**Tashawn Bower**, DE, 6-5, 240, Somerville, NJ (Immaculata) – A very talented athlete, Bower possesses the skills similar to Okwara. He's a long, lean athlete that can apply pressure off the edge. Florida (Jan. 19) might be the team to beat because it's the only school that already lined up an official visit. Louisiana State and Auburn (Sep. 28) appear to be in the mix for Bowers' services as well. Bower hails from the same high school program as **Theo Riddick**.

**The Unknown Recruit** – This coaching staff proved that it will continue to recruit prospects off the public Notre Dame recruiting radar. Is there a defensive line prospect, or two, Notre Dame began recruiting or will be recruiting with before national signing day? I say yes.

### Final Thoughts

It would be a good idea to secure one more defensive lineman for the class of 2013. The numbers appear to be a bit low for the combined classes of 2012 and 2013. The fear of injuries drives my decision making. Notre Dame appears to be set to make a great three-to-five year run, but how did it all start? Defense.

## Recruiting Dilemma: Defensive Line

Written by Brian Smith

Thursday, 13 December 2012 09:13

---

Defense helped propel Notre Dame to a 12-0 record this season, and that started up front with NFL talent – Moore, Nix, and Tuitt – and capable backups to spell them. Those talented defensive linemen allowed **Manti Te'o** to roam more freely than during his prior three seasons in South Bend. Therefore, Te'o's spectacular season can be in part be attributed to those behemoth defensive linemen in front of him.

One more defensive lineman (remember, a CAT linebacker is different than a defensive end in Notre Dame's scheme) would make me quite happy. I, however, would be happy to land both a CAT and a defensive lineman (**Al-Quadin Muhammad** being the CAT) to round out the class of 2013, in addition to other needs being filled such as running back and defensive back.