

Rare Chance For Irish To Land Elite DL Group

Written by Brian Smith

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Each year the Irish fight uphill to land the best defensive linemen. Few of the top defensive linemen come from cold weather states, and when they do it's often Ohio defensive line prospects, where the Buckeyes rule the roost. This year presents a rare opportunity for Notre Dame.

With **Jay Hayes**, a highly touted defensive end prospect from Brooklyn already in the fold, Notre Dame started well. Now Notre Dame needs to land at least three more *hand in the dirt* front seven defenders with as much, if not more, talent. Not an easy task, but the stars appear to be aligning for Notre Dame. Here's why.

New Jersey occasionally sends great players to Notre Dame. Notre Dame does not battle against weather concerns, there's not a dominant in-state program, and many of the young men actually grow up rooting for Notre Dame. Enter **Andrew Trumbetti**. The 6-5, 250-pound defensive end appears to be leaning heavily to Notre Dame. Assuming his next unofficial visit to Notre Dame goes well, Irish fans should expect a commitment from Trumbetti to Notre Dame during or shortly after his South Bend. While many recruiting fans do not know much about Trumbetti, after his junior highlight video makes the rounds they soon will. He's a tremendous prospect that rushes the passer as well as he plays the run. Even better news, Trumbetti is not the only northern defensive line prospect still on the board that Notre Dame holds a good chance to sign.

When Notre Dame recruits the state of Michigan one prime question needs to be asked before anything else. Did the recruit(s) in question grow up a Michigan fan? If the answer ends up being yes, well, the chances for Notre Dame signing that player tend to be quite low. With **Malik McDowell**

, however, it appears that Notre Dame will battle Michigan State more than Michigan for his services. At least that's the initial feeling about McDowell. He's a 290-pound athlete in a big-man's body. From a frame perspective, McDowell resembles

Stephon Tuitt

, although he's probably not as physically mature at this stage of his life. Notre Dame will battle the two in-state programs for McDowell, and then there's an old nemesis as well. Ohio State continues to ardently recruit McDowell, and the Buckeyes should not be counted out. Moving to Chicago, there will be defensive line options for the Irish as well.

The top target for the Irish will be **Enoch Smith**. With a rare amount of natural strength, Smith

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could be a future nose guard for the Irish. At 6-3, 265-pounds, Smith possesses plenty of room to grow. Notre Dame became the first major program to offer Smith, but will not be the last. Hopefully Smith makes his pledge to Notre Dame before making unofficial visits to other programs. He does appear to be a prime candidate to commit to Notre Dame before the end of spring practice. Another Illinois prospect recently began to emerge for Notre Dame.

Dylan Thompson provides the size at 6-5, 270-pounds to play in Notre Dame's 3-4 defense, and he's visiting Notre Dame in April according to ISD's **Christian McCollum**. Ohio State recently offered and should be considered a major player for his services. Illinois also offered. Will Notre Dame extend an offer to stay in the race? This recruitment should be quite interesting for Notre Dame, and it leads to the overall prevailing thought.

Notre Dame needs four (if not five) really good to great defensive linemen within this class, and that does not count the CAT position (**Prince Shembo's** position). If the Irish hope to defeat Alabama, that's the type of recruiting necessary to win national championships. Signing three, perhaps even four defensive linemen from cold weather states would be a blessing. It's just difficult to continually land Dixie's best defensive linemen without any help from up North. This year appears to be the year Notre Dame finds itself in excellent position to cherry pick a top defensive lineman from states such as Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, and South Carolina instead of needing to sign multiple studs from those same states. With that said, Notre Dame will still need to land one or two from down South, but that's better than four or more from down South. Finally, a few names to remember from Dixie that Notre Dame will likely pursue or already began to pursue:

Khairi Clark, DT, 6-3, 310, Hollywood, FL (Chaminade Madonna)

Gerald Willis III, DE, 6-3, 260, New Orleans, LA (Edna Karr)

Dontavius Russell, DT, 6-3, 300, Carrollton, GA

Dexter Wideman, DT, 6-3, 275, Saluda, SC