

Te'o Legacy Already Cemented

Written by Christian McCollum
Saturday, 08 December 2012 06:18



In the hours leading up to Manti Te'o's college announcement, Irish Sports Daily started to get word that him selecting Notre Dame was a very real possibility and just minutes beforehand, we learned that the Irish actually thought they were going to get the five-star linebacker from Hawaii.

While Te'o kept the details of his decision-making process private during his recruitment, he made parts of his plan known. He would call the coaches of his other finalists just before to tell them that he appreciated everything, but wouldn't be attending their school. The school he did select would find out live on ESPNU.

So it wasn't hard to connect the dots that the Irish's confidence was probably coming from the fact that they hadn't heard they were out by the time Te'o was seated at his press conference. But as Te'o began his announcement some of that bravado had to have been replaced with huge lumps in some throats.

"It's always been my plan to call the coaches who I know I haven't chosen, and it came so close I couldn't call one," Te'o opened.

Oh, no.

Te'o Legacy Already Cemented

Written by Christian McCollum
Saturday, 08 December 2012 06:18

From the start, Te'o's recruitment was one of the most fascinating in recent memory for Notre Dame fans - not only because of the caliber of prospect involved, but also because of the uniqueness of recruiting a player so hard from so far away.

It all seemed so unlikely when Te'o took an official visit to South Bend in November of 2008 for an ugly game in uglier weather with an even uglier result - a loss to a Syracuse team that had only won two of its 10 previous games and had fired its coach that week. At that point, the idea of Te'o signing with the Irish was a joke, especially when it was learned that he didn't even remain in the stadium for the entire game.

Still the Irish stayed after him because they thought he was special and belonged at a special place like Notre Dame.

There were stories about Charlie Weis rearranging his sleeping schedule to get on the phone with Te'o, Brian Polian's insane itinerary that included almost a dozen trips to Hawaii in a little over a year and visits to the island for both Weis and Polian that didn't include hotel check-ins.

Call it chance, happenstance or intervention, but something happened to Te'o the day before National Signing Day that would change the trajectory of his career and life forever.

He had yet to make a decision, but was leaning toward USC. While in English class, Te'o found himself relating to the character of Neil in the movie "Dead Poets Society" and prayed for a sign to help him with his own crucial decision, which was only hours away. Te'o's phone rang as he completed his private, silent conversation. He let it go to voicemail, but when he checked it afterward, there was a voicemail from his father letting him know Notre Dame had just called.

He took that as his sign and after praying on it that night, woke up and let his parents know that he'd made his decision.

Te'o didn't call Notre Dame that Wednesday morning, but it wasn't because of time constraints. He wanted them to be treated to the surprise with the rest of the world.

Te'o Legacy Already Cemented

Written by Christian McCollum
Saturday, 08 December 2012 06:18

"It's been a long process, and you know as far as 2009, I've thought hard about it and my family has, and we have all thought hard and long about it, and as far as 2009, I'll be joining Coach Charlie Weis and the Notre Dame Fighting Irish," he announced.

The video of Weis and his staff in the war room at the Gug became an instant classic.

Te'o was the kind of "can't miss" prospect who was destined for great things and while far too many of those ended up missing, it was clear from the time he arrived in South Bend that Te'o was unique even among select company. He handled his first press conference with the type of maturity normally seen from a veteran pro, not an 18-year-old kid.

He arrived at Notre Dame with impossible expectations, but managed to not only reach those expectations, but exceed them. Whether or not he becomes Notre Dame's eighth Heisman Trophy winner later tonight is immaterial in the big picture.

He's already become a Notre Dame legend and will be so forever.