As college football recruiting becomes more and more mainstream, top high school prospects increasingly find themselves being viewed as role models even if many of them don't realize it or are ready for that responsibility.

Max Redfield doesn't have to look far to find somebody who looks up to him and he's been playing the role of role model for a long time now.

The 2013 safety prospect from Mission Viejo High School (Mission Viejo, Calif.) could set a positive example for many youngsters, but his main focus is on his nine-year-old brother, Langston.

"I see him as a little copy of me," says Redfield. "He plays multiple sports, just like I did when I was younger. He plays basketball, soccer and baseball right now and he'll probably get into football later. He's a great little kid. He's really intelligent for his age and he loves to read."

Langston hits the library weekly and can usually be found with a Magic Tree House book now that he's finished all of the Harry Potter stories.

"I love that about him," says Redfield. "He's a really smart guy and I enjoy my time with him."

Redfield's mother, Kathy Mora, has never had any concern leaving Langston with him.

"He's a great big brother," she says. "Max plays a big role in leading his little brother. You'll see him say things like, "Langston, pick up your clothes.' Or, 'Langston, you can't do that.' It's a unique dynamic between the two of them.

"Langston thinks Max is terrific. He'd follow Max anywhere. He talks about playing football and basketball. He talks about doing the same things that Max is doing. He is Max's biggest fan."

Redfield not only understands the responsibility he has to his brother, but relishes the opportunity to provide an example of how to act. Redfield does well in the classroom and in athletics while staying out of trouble.

"That's what I want him do," Redfield says.

Being responsible comes natural to Redfield after being surrounded by adults for much of his childhood.

"He's always been very well-grounded," his mother says. "He always hung out with older kids and always had a much higher level of maturity than his peers."

"I feel like I've learned a lot from hanging out with older people," Max adds. "The way I've been raised with my mom and dad even when I was little, I was always observant of how they acted and that kind of stuff."

Redfield appreciates the friendships he's developed in high school, but can get frustrated at times and has been looking forward to college for years now.

“A lot of high school kids are immature and living in the moment and going with the flow to kind of fit in,” he says. “Obviously I don’t believe in that.

“I’ve been talking about college since sophomore year. I couldn’t wait for something new and a new experience to kind of get out of this Orange County bubble and experience something different.”

Redfield has always been a standout athlete and has narrowed his college options to playing football for Brian Kelly at Notre Dame or for Lane Kiffin at USC. That wasn’t always the plan though.

His mother played soccer at the University of Connecticut and comes from a soccer family. His father was a track athlete at UConn, who was pushing football from an early age while Max viewed himself as a basketball player until he got to high school.

“Football was nothing more than just fun, but after I broke out and started as a sophomore on varsity, I felt like football would be more of my future,” Max says. “It’s more of a business decision than anything.”

Redfield still loves basketball and plans on playing in college.

“Coach Kelly is fine with it as long as I’m contributing to the team and making an impact,” Redfield said before adding that Kiffin would also support the dual-sport role.

“Their basketball team is not as great as Notre Dame’s, but he supports multi-sport athletes.”

Mora always knew her son was a talented athlete, but there was a time not too long ago when she was skeptical. Redfield told his mom that college coaches visiting Mission Viejo to check on

older players like Jahleel Pinner and Tre Madden were also noticing him.

“Even then, I was like, ‘OK, Max. Whatever you say,’” she laughs.

But things quickly picked up steam following Redfield’s sophomore season and became very real very fast.

“I still have a hard time believing it and kind of won’t until it’s done and he’s squared away and set,” said Mora. “When he got the first offer from USC, it was like, ‘OK, now I know he’s at least got a place to go. If nothing else happens, he can go to USC and that’s awesome.’”

And even after gathering scholarship offers from across the country, it seemed like USC would in fact be the place for him. He offered a commitment to the Trojans this past summer, but Kiffin encouraged him to take advantage of his ability to go on official visits to other schools. Redfield did and was struck by what he saw when he made a trip to Notre Dame in October.

“When he came back, it wasn’t about them being undefeated and being a great team,” Mora remembers. “It was more, ‘Mom, I really felt a connection there. They have such a great atmosphere. They really think I can be successful there. I think I can be successful on the field, sure, but academically as well. I think I can do really well there.’

“It wasn’t the facilities. It wasn’t about the uniforms, it almost wasn’t about football. It was about the school, the atmosphere, the people, the students and all of that. He just felt a real connection. The people have the same goals.

“He said, ‘I don’t know if I would have that at USC. I don’t know if the people there would be heading toward the same thing that I am and have the same goals that I have.’”

A few weeks later, Redfield decided he needed to look at everything and decommitted from USC.

“He went to Notre Dame and saw something that he hadn’t seen anywhere else and felt a connection there and then was kind of like, ‘Oh gosh, I need to take a step back and make sure I am exploring all of my options and make sure I am making the right decision,’” his mother says. “That was a real tough thing for him to do.”

It was another sign of that maturity that had been there for a long time.

“I didn’t encourage him to do that,” his mother says. “He made that decision on his own. I was real proud of how he did that.”

Redfield came out and called the Irish his leader, but a trip back to USC this past weekend has pulled the Trojans back into a tie. He’ll announce his decision at the Under Armour All-American Game next month, but is only looking forward to next week’s quiet period, which will allow him to focus on his senior basketball season.

Mora is proud, but isn’t quite ready to sit back and reflect on what her son has accomplished as a student, an athlete or a recruit.

“It’s pretty incredible what he’s been able to achieve,” she says. “He’s very self-motivated. I rarely have to push him to go to practice or do his homework. He’s very good at keeping himself on track. I’ve taken a step back somewhat, but not yet. Once this is done, I’ll finally be able to step back and think about how he’s done us proud the way he’s handled everything.”

But she’s already proud of the example he’s set as a big brother.

“I would be happy for Langston to follow in Max’s footsteps and exactly what he’s done,” Mora says. “I have no problem leaving Langston with Max. You never have to worry about Max steering him wrong or showing him the wrong things. It’s never been an issue.”

And Redfield is going to take advantage of the months he has left at home playing basketball, kicking a soccer ball around, going to his games or going to the movies with his little brother.

“I’m definitely going to miss him. Hopefully my parents can get him out there to visit every now and then and I’ll definitely see him when I play on the West Coast, but I’m going to miss him a lot.”