Written by Brian Town
Friday, 25 January 2013 18:46

2014 defensive back **Malik Cyphers** (Westlake Village/Oaks Christian) knew exactly what to expect when the 2012 season opened up last year and that's being isolated with the oppositions best wide receiver to test whether he had returned to form.

Having missed the last six games of 2011 with a knee injury, the 5-foot-10, 172-pound junior knew that offensive coordinators would adjust their game plans to see if they could take advantage of the Oaks Christian defender. What they found instead was a young man hungrier than ever and seemingly up for the challenge.

“A lot of coaches were trying to test me because I was coming off that injury,” said Cyphers. “I believe I was able to prove myself by being on an island all by myself. Really, a corner’s dream is to be on that island and going one-on-one with the best. I love when they try to test me because after the first time they usually won't try it again.”

After each play the Oaks Christian standout also had a message that needed to be delivered to the opponent’s sideline.

“I’d usually have a few choice words for the receiver and tell him he better tell his coaches not to throw over here again,” said the talented corner back with a laugh. “I don't play that.”

Cyphers helped Oaks Christian to an 8-3 record last season and in the process earn valuable experience on how to play through adversity. He hopes to use this newfound knowledge to benefit the team in 2013.

“I have to let the younger guys know about the winning tradition here at Oaks Christian and what it's like to be around great players like Ishmael Adams (UCLA), Jordan Payton (UCLA) and all the great players that have come through here,” he explained. “We have to teach these younger guys that you have to come in and work hard. If you do that, everything’s going to pay off for us.

“That's what we do at Oaks Christian. We work hard, lift, run and we put in the extra effort to be able to go out there and get the win.”

That type of attitude has already started to draw the attention of recruiters from around the nation hoping to get a closer look at the California product.

“I just have one offer from SMU right now, but I’ve been talking to a bunch of other schools also,” claimed Cyphers. “I've been talking to Notre Dame, Boise State, Georgia Tech, Washington, Washington State, Mississippi State, Missouri and Oregon. There are just a bunch of schools showing interest.”

Those are some impressive schools and he's definitely interested in all of them, but there's one particular program that highly intrigues the dynamic junior.

“I've been looking into Notre Dame a lot and not just for football, but because they have high academics,” he admitted. “That's what's going be most important for me in the future because I know football's not always going to be there forever. When I make my decision it will not just be based on sports, but mostly on academics. Notre Dame is very high up there and I see it being a good fit for me academically. A would be honored to get my degree there. I haven't had a

chance to talk to Notre Dame yet, but I've been getting tons of letters from them."

What exactly will he be looking for in a college and what does he consider the total package?

"I'm really big on academics and I'm really hoping to get more than one degree," stated Cyphers. "I'm planning to go into communications or business. It will also come down to whether I can enjoy my time there. On some of these unofficial trips, these college coaches tell me it's important to be able to live in the college that you choose, so once I get comfortable with the school, both athletically and academically, I'll make my choice."

Even though a conversation with the Irish hasn't developed quite yet, the defensive prospect has been getting the lowdown from his teammate and friend, 2014 Oaks Christian quarterback, **Brandon Dawkins**
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"Brandon went up there last year and told me just how amazing it was," shared the defensive back. "I definitely want to take a trip up there myself and see what it's like out there. I just want to get around the environment and see if it's exactly what my quarterback says it's like. I really can't wait to see the Irish in action for myself."