It's not every day that a high school student turns down an invitation from Harvard, but that's exactly what **Andrew Antognoli** did on Wednesday and it wasn't a very difficult decision.

Antognoli had accepted a preferred walk-on offer from Harvard during a visit to Cambridge, Mass., in early December, but when Notre Dame special teams coach Scott Booker called Antognoli on Wednesday offering the same position in South Bend, the 6-foot-3, 190-pounder from Fresno, Calif. (San Joaquin Memorial) didn't waste any time accepting.

"I'm a Catholic, I come from a Catholic school," Antognoli said. "I've always been a Notre Dame fan and when he offered me, I couldn't believe it. I had no hesitation."

He'd also been looking at Stanford and Yale, but is thrilled to be headed to Notre Dame as a preferred walk-on.

"I was ecstatic," he said. "I couldn't believe it. I would have never thought I would have ended up at Notre Dame, but now I have. I'm real excited, all of my hard work has paid off and I can't wait to take it to the next level.

"They're a top tier program. They're the big gun out there. When you hear Notre Dame football,

that's probably the biggest fan base. The tradition is ridiculous."

Antognoli has never been to South Bend, but Booker invited him out for a spring practice and he plans on being there. It was a quick process for the Irish and Antognoli, although his head coach had been in contact with Notre Dame West Coast recruiter Mike Denbrock for a while.

Denbrock stopped by the school in December and Booker followed up with a visit earlier this month. Booker said he had to check on some other guys before getting back to Antognoli last night.

Antognoli feels like he's getting the opportunity to play big-time college football without sacrificing the type of education he would have got at Harvard.

"It's the same thing," he said. "It's a prestigious school too. The Mendoza School of Business is one of the best, if not the best in the country. I couldn't wait to get a hold of my opportunity and become a member of the Notre Dame family."

Antognoli plans to arrive at Notre Dame ready to compete.

"Coach Booker told me I could compete, so I'm working hard to be at the level the guys who already there are at if not better," he said. "I hope to start my freshman year and be a true freshman rather than a redshirt. I'd love to help the team this year, so I'm working hard to become the best I can be.

"I have a lot of leg speed. I'm long-levered. I'm 6-3, 190, so I'm not a small punter. I have the potential to develop into a very, very good specialist with hard work. With all of the resources I would have at Notre Dame, I think I can reach my maximum potential."

He also kicked for his high school squad, but will be putting his effort into punting.

“My main focus will be punting going on to the college level. That doesn’t close the door, but I’m more of an emergency guy.”