Kylie Fitts de-committed from USC earlier this month and has an official visit planned to Notre Dame this weekend. For this reason, the ISD film room opened its doors to Fitts for a full evaluation and let me tell you he is one heck of a player. The defensive end visited UCLA this past weekend and from the looks of it his visit with the Irish may be his last before national signing day on February 6.

Fitts had plenty of action during his recruiting process that resulted in 25 scholarship offers from schools like Oklahoma, Washington, Ole Miss, and Wisconsin. In addition to his interest in Notre Dame and UCLA, he also likes Oregon and Alabama.

FRAME/GROWTH POTENTIAL

Fitts is a good sized kid at 6-foot 4 and 260 pounds. Everything I looked at on him had his height and weight right around there and after watching his film I have no reason to believe it's not accurate. The Redlands East Valley High star looks good in pads and even dwarfed a few of the offensive tackles he was going against.

With his height and frame he could easily put on another 30 pounds over the next two years. That would put him at around 290 pounds, which would be ideal for a defensive end in Irish defense coordinator Bob Diaco's 3-4 scheme.

ATHLETIC ABILITY

Fitts is extremely agile with great quickness. He has a tremendous first step off the ball which makes it tough for offensive linemen to matchup with him. That first step also sets up everything he does in terms of rushing the passer or shooting a gap. It seems as though once the ball is snapped he's already one step ahead of everyone on the offensive or defensive line.

His agility really shines with his lateral movement. He's able to change directions on a dime while keeping his shoulders square to his target. He's also able to maneuver through tight spaces or areas without any issues and never seems to get caught up in the wash. When watching him move you have to remind yourself that you're watching a kid who weighs 260 pounds.

I'm not sure what his overall speed is, but the way he closes on quarterbacks and running backs makes me think he's between 4.8 and 4.9 in the 40-yard dash. There are times on film when he turns on the afterburners and is able to make up ground in a hurry on offensive skill players. Again, for his size the Redlands, Calif. native moves more like a linebacker than a defensive end.

It was apparent to me on film that Fitts is not only a big kid, but he's strong as well. You can see his power when he rips inside and splits a double-team or sheds a block to get to the ball carrier. The teams he's playing against make the attempt to chip him in pass protection, but he goes through the extra help like they weren't even there. When you combine his quick first step with his strength he becomes a nightmare to try and block, especially on the high school level.

SKILLS/TECHNIQUE

Fitts does a number of things really well as a defensive end. One of the first things I noticed is his ability to keep outside leverage when he has contain. His inside hand placement is perfect while the outside half of his body stays to the outside of the man trying to reach block him. This technique, when combined with his lateral movement, makes it tough for anyone to get outside of him.

I touched on this already, but he uses his hands really well in a number of situations. Very rarely does he let an offensive player get into his body because he's always meeting them first with his hands. Once he has his hands inside of the would-be blocker he does a great job of shedding him, reading the play, and getting to the ball. These are also both great indicators of his strength and understanding of his technique.

His rip move to the B gap is quick, explosive, and hard to stop. This is one of many instances when that quick first of his step really helps. Once he takes his first step he follows with a second and simultaneously rips his outside arm all the way through until he's in the opponent's backfield. He uses this technique on run or pass downs and it's equally efficient in both situations.

Fitts is able to rush the passer off the outside edge of the tackle or in a wide nine technique. His favorite move is combining the rip with an outside speed rush. He'll also use that same speed rush move to set up his second favorite move, the inside counter. Once he has the offensive tackle thinking speed rush he either swats his hands away or rips back inside while making a beeline to the quarterback.

What adds to the success of his pass rush (and everything else he does) is his nonstop motor and hustle that he takes with him on every play. He could have the greatest technique in the world, but if it weren't for his desire and willingness to give everything he has, he wouldn't be half the player he is today.

In addition to all the other things he does well it shouldn't be overlooked that he's a physical player, especially when engaging other offensive linemen. He definitely likes to get after it and plays with a chip on his shoulder. He has a great combination of technique, energy, and physicality that makes him a player that would fit in very well with anyone's defense.

OVERALL

I believe Fitts is a great fit as a defensive end in Notre Dame's 3-4 scheme. He has the ability to rush the passer effectively and is stout against the run. He can play inside over a guard or

tackle or lineup well outside if need be. He's strong and quick with great technique and an overall understanding of what his responsibilities are as a defensive end. If he's able to bulk himself up over the next six months he's someone who could provide instant depth to the Irish defensive line.

GRADES

Size: 85 (prototypical Irish DE size when he gains 30 pounds)

Strength: 90 (beats two players easily and sometimes three)

Speed: 80 (really good for his size)
Athletic Skills: 85 (agile, quick, great motor)
Technique: 85 (uses his hands like a veteran player)

Versatility: 85 (can line up anywhere along the front that you'd like)
Upside: 4.0 (can crack the two-deep this year or the next)
Overall Grade: 4.0

GRADE KEY

90-100 – Elite/Exceptional: Skill set is rare and gives prospect ability to dominate
80-89 – Very Good/Outstanding: Skill set is a significant strength
70-79 – Average: Skill set is solid, not a significant weakness
60-69 – Below Average: Skill set is not a strength for this player and could become a liability
50-59 – Very Poor: Prospect does not possess this trait and it is a definite liability

OVERALL/UPSIDE GRADE KEY

5 – Elite: Player is one of the best players at his position nationally, potentially dominant
4 – Very Good/Outstanding: Player is a potential standout and starter, could also play early
3 – Solid: Player is a potential contributor, could eventually start down the road
2 – Below Average: Player does not possess the talent to be a significant contributor
1 – Poor: Let's be honest, Notre Dame is not going to bring in anyone with a one!!