

## 2014 Position Projections

Written by Sean Mele

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No rest for the wicked as Notre Dame and Irish Sports Daily turn their immediate attention away from the class of 2013 and shoot it directly at the class of 2014. After the tremendous haul from this year's class nothing is more important in the world of recruiting than backing it up with another top five crop of student-athletes from next year's class. Regardless of how good a coach is he needs great players to carry out his schemes and the Irish are putting in the effort to continue bringing great players to South Bend.

So what are Notre Dame's needs in 2014? I'll go through each position and try to give you some idea of what head coach Brian Kelly and the rest of his staff will be looking to nail down this time next year.

### **QUARTERBACK**

All college teams need at least one signal-caller in every one of their recruiting classes. They need three who are ready to play on game day and another two to run the scout team. Notre Dame will have five scholarship quarterbacks on the roster next season and they will lose one of them at the end of the season (Tommy Rees). They will need to replace Rees with someone in next year's recruiting class. They have only offered one quarterback so far, but in order to be sure they can fill the spot they will have to offer a few more before it's all said and done.

### **RUNNING BACK**

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Notre Dame isn't resting on their laurels after bringing in Greg Bryant and Tarean Folston. They've offered nine really good backs already, but two of them have already committed to other schools. That leaves seven to most likely fill two spots or maybe three if they're all really special. This is a need every year due how injury prone the position is and with their short shelf life, how some of the good ones take off early to play on Sundays. Being able to build off of Bryant and Folston would be ideal heading into the 2014 season.

### WIDE RECEIVERS

I'm not sure where Notre Dame is going find playing time for all the current wide receivers that are going to be on the roster in the next two years, much less the ones they sign in 2014. They've offered 12 2014 receivers up this point and one has already committed (Justin Brent). I would really focus on getting one more receiver who is a game changing deep threat - that's what they need to bring in next year. They will have every other imaginable category of receiver on the roster in 2013, but to get a player like Alabama's Amari Cooper in 2014 would be huge.

### TIGHT END

I've talked to a couple of Irish coaches who told me they're most likely going to only take two tight ends in 2014. They didn't take any in 2012, so it is a need, but not a huge need in terms of numbers. They've offered three and will most likely offer a few more, but once the first two commit the door will be closed on the ones who sat on their hands. Notre Dame won't lose a tight end after next season either, so it's important to factor that in as well when thinking about numbers.

### OFFENSIVE LINE

Kelly made it very clear in yesterday's press conference that offensive line is a critical area of recruiting for the Irish in the class of 2014. They brought in five high quality players this year and I wouldn't be surprised if they bring in another five in 2014. There were times during preparation for the bowl game that for one reason or another, there weren't enough offensive linemen to practice the way they would have liked to - that can't happen anymore. Notre Dame has offered

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13 offensive linemen so far and has had one commit (Jimmy Byrne). I would look for at another five to seven future offers to ensure they get the number they're looking for next year.

### DEFENSIVE LINE

This was another position Kelly specifically pointed out yesterday as a major area of focus for the Irish in 2014. Kona Schwenke will be lost to graduation and Louis Nix III and Stephon Tuitt may be lost to the NFL after the 2013 season. Notre Dame has offered ten defensive linemen already and one has pledged (Jay Hayes) to playing in South Bend. Look for the number of offers to increase over the summer. They need to build on players like Eddie Vanderdoes and at the same time build some depth, so I would guess they'll take at least four at this spot next year.

### LINEBACKER

The Irish will lose all four potential starters after the 2013 season (Danny Spond, Prince Shembo, Carlo Calabrese, and Dan Fox). They have a nice stable of linebackers waiting in the wings, but the depth at inside linebacker is a concern. They've offered nine 2014 linebackers with one (Greer Martini) already making a verbal commitment to play for Kelly. I would look for them to really press hard and try to get two stud inside linebackers and two more on the outside. Notre Dame was ready to take five linebackers in the 2013 class and ended up only taking three, so that should give you an idea that they'll want a decent amount next year.

### SAFETY

There will be nine safeties on the 2013 roster, 10 if Jamoris Slaughter gets a medical redshirt. Seven of them will be sophomores or younger. I don't see a huge need here in terms of depth or talent, but if someone like Max Redfield should come along then the door will be swung open in a hurry. Notre Dame has offered seven safeties and I'm guessing they would be limited to taking one or maybe two at this time next year.

### CORNERBACK

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I believe cornerback will be an area the Irish treat with a sense of urgency every year from now until Kelly's no longer the coach in South Bend. I don't think he ever wants to have the question marks going into the season like he did in 2012 about who was going to play corner. I also think pinning your hopes on offensive players to transition to defense is a dangerous game that won't always work out like it did for Bennett Jackson and KeiVarae Russell. Notre Dame will look to build on players like Devin Butler and Cole Luke by bringing in three to four more legitimate corners in 2014. They've offered 11 so far and have yet to bag their first commit. This upcoming camp season look for that offer sheet to increase by six to eight more players so they'll get to their target number.