

Pursuit Of 2013 TEs

Written by Christian McCollum

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When Notre Dame started looking at tight ends in the Class of 2013, Pennsylvania's Adam Breneman was definitely one of the prospects at the top of the list, but there were at least some Irish coaches who liked Mike Heurman of Florida just as much, if not more.

Fortunately for the Irish, neither prospect was interested in letting the process play out very long.

Breneman spent the summer and fall of his junior year visiting just about every school on his list. He made a pair of trips to South Bend and the Irish were among his finalists along with Penn State, Ohio State and Maryland. In March, the lifelong Nittany Lions fan made his pledge to Penn State public.

But even before Breneman made his decision, Notre Dame had turned the heat up on Heurman.

Tony Alford extended an offer to Heurman in December and the two quickly formed a strong relationship. Heurman's brother, Jeff, plays tight end at Ohio State and many felt the Buckeyes would be the team to beat, but Alford's persistence kept the Irish atop the board throughout.

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His brother advised him to make the best decision for himself. In order to do that, Heuerman knew he needed to see South Bend for himself. In fact, he decided he needed to see it twice. Heuerman flew up to Notre Dame at the end of March and as he sensed himself growing closer to making a commitment to the Irish, he snuck in one more trip to South Bend a month later.

Alford and Irish tight ends coach Scott Booker visited Heuerman's school on April 26th, a day before Heuerman was scheduled to announce his decision, and they left with a new commitment.

Rumors continued to link Heuerman to the Buckeyes with some Ohio State insiders predicting a flip, but Heuerman stayed firm. He was annoyed by the persistence of the Buckeye rumors even before he committed and didn't wish well on those who started or spread them.

He enrolled at Notre Dame last month. While all of the Irish recruits and players were happy to see Brian Kelly return to South Bend, probably none were happier than Heuerman.

It seemed clear Notre Dame had planned on bringing in one tight end in the 2013 class, but the Irish didn't stop recruiting the position even after gaining Heuerman's pledge.

The Irish had already offered prospects like DeSean Smith and Hunter Henry when Heuerman committed, but they also reached out to North Carolina's Josh McNeil afterward. McNeil had some initial interest in the Irish, but it never materialized into anything. He'd go on to commit to both Alabama and LSU, but is headed to a junior college next season.

So again, it seemed the Irish felt set with signing just one in Heuerman.

But then in December, Durham Smythe reached out to Notre Dame.

The Texas tight end had been committed to the in-state Longhorns since March, but was concerned with the offensive system in Austin, decommitted in December. While Stanford

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remained in touch with Smythe even after his commitment to Texas, Notre Dame hadn't.

The Irish asked Smythe to stay patient as they looked to see if they could find a spot for him in the 2013 class. Stanford and Michigan also emerged on Smythe's short list following his change of plans. Some schools tried to push Smythe to make a decision, but he wanted to wait to see what Notre Dame had to say.

Just as he was boarding a plane to return from an official visit to Stanford, Kerry Cooks called. The Irish were 're-extending' the scholarship they'd offered earlier in the process. Booker made a trip down to Texas and Smythe decided to take an official to Notre Dame on Jan. 25th instead of a planned trip to Michigan.

That was a major indication of Smythe's interest in Notre Dame and he offered his commitment to the Irish before leaving South Bend.

Notre Dame wanted to bring in a high-quality tight end in 2013, it got two.