The number of wide receivers Notre Dame takes in their 2014 recruiting class remains to be seen, but regardless of quantity, they can be sure of the quality if they continue to go after players like **K.D. Cannon** . The Mt. Pleasant, Texas product has been causing quite a commotion in his part of the country by putting up some impressive numbers and making some spectacular plays. Cannon caught 95 passes for 1,516 yards and 25 touchdowns this past season on his way to being named first team Class 4A All-State. He's also caught the attention of 12 other schools besides the Irish including Texas, Texas A&M, and Oklahoma. It's still early in the process for Cannon and although he's yet to name the ever important "top five", he does seem to favor the Sooners.

FRAME/GROWTH POTENTIAL

Cannon measures somewhere between 6-foot and 6-foot-1 and weighs right around 160 pounds depending on who you ask. He's a little undersized on paper in terms of bulk, but he plays much bigger than that on the field. I would describe him more as wiry and strong than thin and frail. Obviously there's the need for him to gain 20 to 25 pounds over the next two years because he'll get split in half playing big time college football at his current weight. Luckily for the Mt. Pleasant High School star he's got the length to pack on pound after pound of muscle.

If he stays at his current height I like him as a slot receiver in Notre Dame's offense, but if he grows another inch or two he could easily park himself out wide. He has the skills to play either one and that's always a possibility as well.

ATHLETIC ABILIITY

Cannon has good speed, but the first thing that jumped out at me was how he uses his elusiveness to make people miss. He is one slippery hombre on the field and getting a hold of him is no simple task. He'll bait the defender one way and shimmy past him the other. In fact, I saw him make the same shoulder fake and lateral slide move three times in a row to the inside, which is more difficult than the outside because it's right into the teeth of the defense. He's as light on his feet as any receiver I've watched in his class. Some of the things he does after the catch to get loose is a testament to his athleticism.

As I mentioned he has good speed and has been timed anywhere between 4.45 and 4.55 seconds in the 40-yard dash. He has excellent acceleration off the snap and when he gets in the open field he's tough to catch up with before he gets in the end zone. He has a really nice combination of speed and elusiveness that makes him dangerous on both the short and long routes.

When talking about Cannon's strength you'd think he wouldn't have a whole lot based upon his size, but he'll surprise you with a few things. He's not a feather in the wind when it comes to getting him on the ground and if you're fortunate enough to get your hands on him he's going to fight for extra yards. He's also a pretty good blocker and does more than hold his own against the defense. When reading up on Cannon he makes it clear in several interviews that he knows he needs to improve his strength and is going to work hard to do so.

SKILLS/TECHNIQUE

Cannon does a number of things well, but he excels with his route running. The routes themselves are well executed, but he also does a number of little things well. How often have you watched a receiver run a route and yelled at the TV, "Why did he stop running?" as the ball sailed over his head? Cannon never gives up on a deep route and continues to run his pattern whether or not he was the intended target. There were a few instances when even the cornerback stopped running, but Cannon stayed with it and made the catch for a big chunk play or touchdown. He also always seems to work his way back to the football, which I preach about often, when running outs or comeback routes. This keep the separation he's created between himself and the defensive back.

Another thing I like about Cannon is when the ball is in the air it's his and nobody else's. He goes and gets it regardless of where it is or who's covering him. If that means he's exposed himself to a big hit or being undercut he could care less. Another way to describe this would be "fearless". You don't catch 95 passes in a single season without taking some chances when the ball is in the air.

In order to be able to go after every ball thrown his way he has to have a quality set of hands and he has that gift as well. The tough catches don't look as tough when he goes up and snags it out of the air or it's close to skipping off the ground. He looks the ball in and for the most part keeps it from getting into his body until after it's secure. The only thing he needs to work on is keeping the ball tight to his body when he's running after the catch. He has a habit of letting it fly outside the framework of his body, which makes it easy for a defender to strip.

OVERALL

Cannon is one of the better receivers I've evaluated since my time at ISD in terms of overall package. Some may be bigger, faster, stronger, shiftier or more explosive, but few offer a complete set of skills like he does. He would be a great slot receiver in Notre Dame's offensive package and would be a weapon in the screen game as well. As I mentioned before, depending on growth, he could play out wide too. He has the potential to be a sleeper in this class in terms of a kid not getting a ton of offers from a lot of teams who'll wish they didn't pass on him.

GRADES

Size: 80 (decent height – needs to bulk up)

Strength: 80 (for his size he fights like a pit-bull)
Speed: 85 (borderline elite)
Athletic Skills: 90 (yards after catch is his expertise)
Technique: 90 (is a great route runner, ball catcher, and does the little things too)

Versatility: 80 (will play slot, may play out wide, can run all the routes)
Upside: 5.0 (I just have a hunch he's going to be really special down the road)
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!