

If your favorite team is searching for a hard-hitting safety who can run and cover plenty of space then look no further than Tennessee's <u>Todd Kelly, Jr</u>. The 2014 prospect would be an excellent pull for Notre Dame come signing day next year. As expected, Kelly has caught the eye of 22 other schools besides the Irish including many familiar names such as Alabama, Clemson, Stanford, and USC. He has family ties to the Tennessee Volunteers and many in the know believe he'll end wearing orange and white. As for Kelly, he claims he's keeping his options open and has proved that by visiting several other schools in the past year. He also moonlights as a running back and punt returner and was instrumental in his high school team winning a state championship this past season.

FRAME/GROWTH POTENTIAL

I love the way this kid looks in pads and he seems bigger (or at least taller) than his 6-foot-1, 190-pound listing. Kelly is what you want your safeties to be – tall enough to survey the field with just enough bulk to still be able to move and make you take notice when he hits you. I don't believe he's done growing either and if he could get to 6-foot-2 or 6-foot-3 then he becomes an even more attractive player down the road. Still, he'll be able to perform at a high level regardless of whether or not he adds another inch or two to his frame.

Speaking of frames, the Webb School standout will be able to pack another 20 to 25 pounds of muscle to his without any setbacks. With the way he hits at his current weight, I'll be more than curious to see how he does the same at 215.

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ATHLETIC ABILITY

Kelly has plenty of speed to be proficient at any of the tasks he'll be asked to perform as a Division I safety. His time in the 40-yard dash is 4.51 seconds and it shows up on the field in a major way. He may not have the initial burst of a track star, but once he gets in full stride he is a thing of beauty to watch. Obviously this helped him in his time as a running back, but he can fly all over the field as a defender as well.

All you have to do is watch him run with the ball a few times to see how well he moves his feet and can change directions. He has the footwork at safety too, but his ability to maneuver through and around defenders gives you the sense that it'll translate to both sides of the ball. When he's at safety he breaks out of his backpedal quickly as his mind shifts from coverage mode to search and destroy mode. He can also get vertical in a hurry if his deep half is threatened by an offensive player.

Kelly seems to have the strength to excel at safety as is evident by the way he sticks and tackles. He drives through ball carriers and delivers some powerful hits - that's not happening unless he as the confidence that his time in the weight room gives him.

SKILLS/TECHNIQUE

The first thing that caught my eye about Kelly's work in the secondary is his physical style of play. He lights people up and is fearless with the way he throws around his body. It doesn't matter if he's taking on a block or filling the alley in support of the run, he brings it whenever he can. When watching his film there were several "oh wow" moments where I thought to myself, "This is the type of play you want out of your safety." He's tough, intimidating, and with the way he lays the wood I wouldn't be surprised if his reputation doesn't make his opponent's skilled players a little nervous when they cross his path.

He has great anticipation of the ball in coverage and his timing when he makes his break is usually spot-on perfect. Kelly reads the quarterback's drop while he's in his backpedal and as soon as the ball is in the air he's on his way to make a play. His instincts are really good and he

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doesn't seem to guess – his speed and footwork compliment what his mind sees and enable him to be as good as he is in coverage.

Kelly has great ball skills and I would consider him a bona-fide ball hawk with his sure-handedness. His mindset goes beyond breaking on the ball and getting credit for a pass breakup. He clearly isn't satisfied unless he makes the interception and he has the knack to get it done like that often. Much like a receiver he'll go up and over an offensive player to get the football. It's clear his time on offense has given him the advantage to create turnovers for his team when he's on the defensive side of the ball.

He's a very good punt returner and could help any team in that regard. The few clips I saw of him as a return man mirrored his fearless attitude as hitter. He reads blocks well, but most of it is his own mentality and ability to do whatever it takes to gain positive yards or make a big play.

OVERALL

Kelly is a true safety in every sense of the word. He has ideal size, can hit like a truck in coverage or against the run, and can cover plenty of space with his speed. He doesn't just rely on his athleticism and has tremendous instincts and technique that put him in position to make plays on the football. I believe he would be a tremendous addition to Notre Dame's secondary and if he was the only safety they took in this class I wouldn't have a problem with that choice. I'm actually quite surprised that one publication has him rated as a three-star prospect.

GRADES

Size: 85 (prototypical safety body – will get even bigger)

Strength: 80 (has it in all the right places to suit his game as a physical player)

Speed: 88 (runs well with great form)

Athletic Skills: 85 (good feet and change of direction)

Technique: 85 (physically dominant, great instincts and ball skills)

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Versatility: 85 (does everything asked of him really well – can return kicks too)

Upside: 4.0 (could see playing time early depending on the situation)

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!