When Jaylon Smith announced his commitment to Notre Dame in June, it was clear the Irish had reeled in their top target in the Class of 2013 and possibly the best linebacker in the entire country. Still, the drama was far from over…far from over.

At one point, Notre Dame had five linebacker commits, but the Irish inked just three – Smith, Michael Deeb and Doug Randolph.

The Irish went on a run of linebackers in the summer, as Deeb, Danny Mattingly and Alex Anzalone would all make verbal commitments to Notre Dame in late-June and early-July before Randolph made the switch from Stanford to Notre Dame the first week of September.

Deeb was actually impressed that Notre Dame didn't just jump on him and throw an offer his way just because other schools were doing so. He liked the fact that the Irish were patient and were sure about his play and his character before offering him. He visited in June and made his commitment to Notre Dame shortly after returning home.

Mattingly committed just days before Deeb during an unofficial visit of his own, but the strength of that commitment was in question in the months to come. He wasn't nearly as tight with his future teammates as other members of the class and it became clear he actually had his sights set on playing tight end in college while the Irish saw him as a linebacker.

He took an official visit to Washington in October and despite warnings against taking any other visits from the Notre Dame staff, Mattingly took another trip to UCLA in November. Once he made the visit to Westwood, it was clear he wouldn't be a part of the Irish's class and they essentially stopped recruiting him. He "decommitted" the first week of December, but Notre Dame had no longer considered him a commitment by that point.

It wasn't considered a major loss because the Irish had managed to successfully pluck Randolph from Stanford by that point. Randolph first visited South Bend for Notre Dame's Junior Day in March and from that point, other members of the class were predicting he'd eventually sign with the Irish. When Anzalone announced for Notre Dame at The Opening in July, it was believed that Randolph had missed his opportunity, but it came again and he jumped on it in September.

Anzalone's recruitment was easily one of the wildest of this cycle. He too was at the Irish's Junior Day in March and hit it off with Randolph and other visitors. Notre Dame was firmly in the mix, but he committed to Ohio State in April.

Anzalone would back off that pledge a month later after photos surfaced of him and other Buckeye prospects at a bar on Twitter. It became a national story when it was discovered the Ohio State fan in the pictures was a sex offender. Common belief is that's why Anzalone decommitted, but it was more of an issue of trust than who was in the pictures.

He was close to offering a pledge to Florida immediately after, but decided to take his time with the process and after a return trip to South Bend in June, made his commitment to Notre Dame on national television in July. The first sign of trouble came just two weeks later when Anzalone made an appearance at Friday Night Lights, Florida's summer camp.

That situation was quickly cleared up, but the Irish were definitely on the watch. Anzalone never ruled out taking an official visit to Florida and in October, he made plans to do so. There was definitely some sort of breakdown in communication between Notre Dame and Anzalone about the trip and the Irish's pursuit of Hawaii linebacker Isaac Savaiinaea. And at times discussions got a little heated.

Anzalone was close to flipping his pledge again at that time and in his mind, probably already had made the switch, but his father forced him to give Notre Dame another chance before making anything official. He made a trip back to South Bend the Sunday after the BYU game and left with a firm pledge to the Irish. He was considered a solid Irish pledge and everyone believed he was ready to enroll early last month, but when the car left Pennsylvania to move him to college, it headed South to Gainesville instead of West to South Bend.

Brian Kelly’s flirtation with the Philadelphia Eagles job led may have led Anzalone to change his mind again, but it’s obvious that the linebacker never stopped dreaming of being a Gator. At least one source says Anzalone's decision was made before the BCS National Championship Game and we do believe there’s a very good chance he would have ended up at Florida regardless of Kelly's status because that was where he really wanted to go all along.

Many believe his father steered him to Florida because that’s where he went for post-grad, but we find that almost impossible to believe and know his parents were as surprised as anyone by the final flip. There were some close to him who thought Notre Dame was the best fit for a variety of reasons, but Anzalone’s camp always wanted him to go to be where he wanted to be and in the end, that was Gainesville.

Some at Notre Dame believe it’s addition by subtraction and that may end up being the case, but in terms of prospects, Anzalone is definitely a loss that puts a bit of a stain on this class.

Smith is definitely the star of the class while Anzalone was the story. Still, there’s a very good chance Smith becomes both in the end.