

## Pursuit Of 2013 DBs

Written by Christian McCollum  
Thursday, 28 February 2013 15:14 -

---



Cole Luke is a quiet kid.

In-person interviews with Luke during the recruiting process were rare and telephone interviews with him were almost non-existent, especially late in the process.

But Luke (pictured) isn't just quiet with reporters, the 2013 Arizona cornerback is quiet in general.

That personality trait made it difficult for many, including some who were intimately involved with it, to get a grasp on exactly what was going on with Luke's recruitment. The one person who always seemed to have the pulse of Luke's feelings was his Hamilton High School coach Steve Belles.

Belles played at Notre Dame in the 1980s and while he's never pushed any of his players to his alma mater, he was never shy to express optimism that one eventually would. The Irish had recruited several of his players over the years and he's always maintained his belief that each prospect needed to make his own decision because it would be their college experience.

The Irish identified Luke early in the process and received as much of a boost from Belles as

## Pursuit Of 2013 DBs

Written by Christian McCollum  
Thursday, 28 February 2013 15:14 -

---

they could have expected when the prospect joined his coach in South Bend for a camp Belles was working. Luke enjoyed the trip, but per usual was understated about the experience.

There were summer reports that Notre Dame had been eliminated following the trip, but Belles denied them and eventually Luke would come out with a top four of the Irish, USC, Texas and Oklahoma.

Notre Dame got Luke back to campus for an official visit in September. Again, there were reports that the Irish hadn't done much and were no better than third on his list following the trip. Even Notre Dame staffers wondered if Luke was impressed judging by his low-key demeanor during the visit. Again, Belles shot down those reports and even said he thought Luke would make the "right choice."

As far as Notre Dame is concerned, Luke did make the "right choice" when he committed to the Irish the first day of November.

Luke was a major get at corner for the Irish, who struck out at the position a year earlier, although flipping KeiVarae Russell over to defense proved to be beneficial. Luke joined Rashad Kinlaw and Devin Butler to form a three-man haul.

Kinlaw was an under-the-radar prospect both because he missed much of his junior season with an injury and because of the fact that his primary high school position was quarterback. Notre Dame had no trouble envisioning the 6-foot-1, 180-pounder filling the role of corner. He visited for the Junior Day in March and committed a day later.

Another New Jersey cornerback prospect, Tre Bell, was also on campus for the Junior Day and it looked like only a matter of time before he committed, but Bell ended up committing to Florida two weeks later. The Gators had always been Bell's favorite team, but in reality, the Irish backed off Bell when they pulled in Butler shortly after the Junior Day. Bell would eventually decommit from the Gators and sign with Vanderbilt.

Butler, from Washington, D.C., took a Midwestern tour in March that saw him visit Penn State,

## Pursuit Of 2013 DBs

Written by Christian McCollum  
Thursday, 28 February 2013 15:14 -

---

Michigan, Wisconsin and finally Notre Dame. As the tour continued, it was clear Butler was liking the schools and he even set a decision date before arriving in South Bend, which seemed to indicate he was ready to commit to one of the schools he'd already visited.

Things changed when he got to South Bend. He committed to the Irish before leaving and set another public announcement date before just deciding to get things over with and let everybody know a week earlier than he intended.

In addition to Bell, Notre Dame also took serious interest in Missouri athlete Ezekiel Elliott, Florida corner Vernon Hargreaves and California corner Chris Hawkins. Elliott was impressed, but committed to Ohio State shortly after attending Notre Dame's Junior Day. Hargreaves developed a true appreciation for Notre Dame, but also realized it wasn't the best fit for him.

The Irish had a real shot at Hawkins, when he visited for the Stanford game. A lifelong USC fan and a Trojan commit when he visited, Hawkins was so blown away that he declined to comment after the trip for fear of saying the wrong thing. He even toyed with the idea of returning for an unofficial a couple weeks later, but the Trojans made it clear they weren't going to hold his spot if he did so and he decided he needed to stay with his childhood dream.

But Notre Dame hosted another USC defensive back pledge for an official visit that weekend and he did talk afterward. Safety prospect Max Redfield had no problem saying all of the things Hawkins was probably thinking. Redfield publicly discussed the idea of decommitting from USC before the visit, but initially it was so he could take a visit to Oregon, something the Ducks wouldn't allow him to do as a Trojan pledge.

What Redfield saw in South Bend accelerated that process. It was clear the Irish had shifted into the lead when he talked about the way he felt he fit in with the people and how they would challenge him inside and outside of athletics. He stayed in contact with Notre Dame commits and even admitted he was rooting for the Irish during their regular season finale against the Trojans in late-November. Still, USC wouldn't go down easily.

USC did get him back to campus for an official visit in December and despite not having high hopes coming into the weekend, the Trojans felt they'd done enough to flip him back by the end of it. The feeling wouldn't last long and a couple days later, Redfield returned to his original

## Pursuit Of 2013 DBs

Written by Christian McCollum  
Thursday, 28 February 2013 15:14 -

---

feelings about the Irish. He would make it official during the Under Armour All-America Game on national television a month later.

Cornerback was a major need for the Irish in the 2013 cycle and they addressed that before adding another headliner to the class, stealing one away from a rival in the process.