



Only a sophomore, [Tommy Hatton](#) wasn't exactly sure where his recruitment was headed, but he received a great indication last Thanksgiving when his St. Joseph's Prep squad matched up with Don Bosco Prep in a New Jersey showdown.

"After I blocked Al-Quadin Muhammad when St. Joe's played Don Bosco and I didn't give up a tackle or a sack, I kind of knew I was good enough to compete," the 6-foot-3, 275-pound offensive lineman in the Class of 2015 said.

"I was so excited because I wanted to prove how good I was and that I could block everybody. I was just a little sophomore from St. Joe's, but I was very excited to compete with the best."

Don Bosco got the win, 20-10, but Hatton saw an uptick in the interest from colleges.

"I got a lot of mail and I met a lot of coaches," he said. "I looked at myself as a higher recruit, but I'm not a very cocky person. I'm very humble."

That interest continued all of the way through the winter with several colleges stopping at the Montvale, N.J., high school to inquire about Hatton and his teammates.

2015 NJ OL Eyes ND Stop

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“It’s like a childhood dream,” said Hatton. “It’s awesome. Ever since I was little, I’ve always dreamed about having these schools’ interest. It’s crazy when I go down to the office and I see Notre Dame, I see Miami, I see Michigan. It’s a really great feeling, but it also makes me really hungry to work harder to get better. I’m always competing to be better.”

Hatton is still looking for his first offer, but has also received interest from schools like Rutgers, Penn State, Ohio State and Florida State. He attended the U.S. Army All-American Underclassmen Combine in San Antonio in January and was the only 2015 prospect named to the all-combine team. He’ll attend a Nike Football Training Camp and a Rivals Camp in the near future for more opportunities to compete against the best.

He had the chance to bump into Irish defensive coordinator Bob Diaco earlier this year. The two couldn’t have any meaningful discussions per NCAA rules, but Diaco did give Hatton his card. Hatton hasn’t had made the call yet, but intends to soon.

“To be honest, I really didn’t know how I was as a prospect,” he said. “I didn’t know if I was just a local prospect or if I was a national recruit until a few weeks ago. Now I’m starting to look at more national schools, so I’m definitely going to call him in the near future. I hope to see him after the dead period is over.”

And if not then, possibly in South Bend soon.

“Me and my family might be coming out to Notre Dame during my spring break, the first week in April, or over the summer,” said Hatton.

Notre Dame is one school that’s already sticking out to the 2015 prospect.

“One, they have very good academics,” he said. “Two, they have great football. They were in the national championship this year and everyone knows Notre Dame. I’ve always dreamed about going to Notre Dame. Notre Dame was always on the short list of my favorite schools. It’s

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just awesome.”

Hatton hopes to get out and see as many schools as possible over the spring break and summer with stops at Michigan, Ohio State and Penn State also possibilities. There’s also a chance his 2014 teammates, defensive lineman Kevin Wilkins and defensive back Kiy Hester, could join him on some of the trips, including the stop at Notre Dame.

“Kevin and Kiy are two of my best friends,” he said. “I think all three of us might come out. I’m not 100 percent sure, but we always talk about it.”

College scouts like Hatton’s ability.

“They like how physical I am and how I smart am and my athleticism; but mostly how physical I play,” he said. “I went against the best kids this year and nobody intimidated me. I was able to play against every single person the same way.”

Hatton prides himself on his work ethic and toughness, which he credits TNT Training in Elmwood Park for helping develop.

It’s early, but Hatton has an outline of what he’s looking for in a college.

“Number one is academics,” he said. “I understand the chances of me going pro or anybody going pro are slim, so if you don’t go to the NFL, you’ve got to get a good job. Notre Dame is one of the best academic schools.

“A few other things are a good relationship with coaches, early playing time and a place where my mom and dad can come see me play. Notre Dame is always on TV, so that’s good. Good facilities, weight room, nice campus; just a place I can feel comfortable, like my home.”