

SPLINTERS FROM THE PRESSBOX - Paul Fullmer '55

Signing Day Big Disappointment;

Top Recruit Flips On Kelly

Coach Brian Kelly picked up an exploding cigar instead of a blue ribbon on National Signing Day. Instead of boasting of a Top Ten recruiting class, Kelly got a rude surprise when California's Player-Of-The-Year, Deontoy Greensberry, walked away from his verbal commitment to the Irish and signed with Houston. The 6-3 receiver was expected to be the next Michael Floyd, but now Kelly goes into the season with a real problem in the receiving corps.

The Irish were supposed to have a firm grasp on Greensberry because they landed his cousin, highly-regarded cornerback Tee Shepard. But the family tie wasn't enough and few could figure out a *logical* reason why Greensberry flipped to Houston.

Kelly did sign 16 freshmen and one transfer. It's interesting that Kelly brought in a transfer because Mike Brey has been doing it successfully for years to bolster his basketball team (e.g. Ben Hansbrough and Scott Martin). Transfers could be Kelly's 'quick fix' to counter those schools that bring in junior college stars with poor grades to fill holes on their roster.

What saved Kelly and ND was the signing of the country's #1 rated quarterback, Gunner Kiel, who is expected to compete for the starting job because he's already enrolled and eligible for spring practice.

What Can Be Done To Restore Sanity?

This entire recruiting process is out of control and seems to get worse every year. That's one reason why I pay absolutely no attention to all the recruiting blather because you usually have a couple of flippers at the very end. Remember, quarterback Kiel had declared for LSU before deciding on ND. So, it works both ways.

Most of the rating services ranked ND's class about 20th in the country. What would it have been without Kiel?

Kelly did address a critical need on defense, bringing in five defensive backs, including the top-ranked Shepard.

On the other hand, without the stringent academic restrictions Notre Dame enforces, Urban Meyer roared into Columbus and recruited a top-five class for Ohio State.

Maybe my Dad had the solution to this recruiting nonsense forty years ago when he said each team should only be able to sign players from their state or an adjacent one. In addition, each team would have three wild cards to use on players from states around the country. Then coaching would become a bigger factor and we could see whether the Urban Meyers and Nick Sabans of the world really are worth those millions they get when they jump around to more lucrative jobs.

History Not Kind To All Top Classes

In 2008 the three leading recruiting analysts agreed that the Irish had one of the best recruiting hauls. Yet, that class didn't win like Alabama, Oklahoma and Ohio State - the 'other' winners. No doubt that coaching is a big factor and the switch from Charlie Weis to Kelly was a real speed bump that the Irish didn't handle very well.

Also one class won't usually win a national championship. You need consistently good recruiting classes and a so-so one like this hurts unless a majority of the 16 recruits make major contributions, but that won't happen because injuries, academics and transfers take their toll.

Kudos To Muffet And Mike

All Irish fans should tip their green hats to basketball coaches Muffet McGraw and Mike Brey. McGraw has her women's team playing at a super-high level as they chalked up 22 wins and earned the #2 rating in the nation. Instead of relying primarily on All-American Skylar Diggins, Muffet has worked nine players into the rotation to maintain team chemistry and be prepared for tournament time.

Brey has been forced to go back to his slow down offense because of lack of scoring fire power. By doing so, he has burned some big time foes, including Syracuse when the Orange Men were #1 and Marquette this past weekend. Brey doesn't have any 20-point scorers, but he has proved you can win with great defense and a smart game plan. Now it's clear why Brey has earned Coach-Of-The-Year honors in the past. He is willing to shelve his reace horse offense to frustrate and burn opponents with his slow motion offense.

Brey may be doing it with mirrors this year, but it's great to see those dramatic victories.

Go Irish!

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