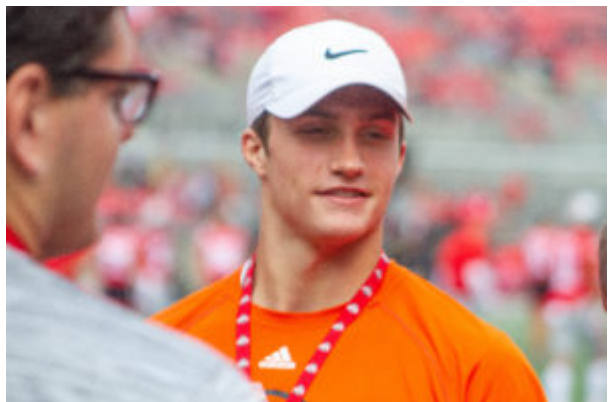


A Look At Ohio State's Linebacker Room, Commitments And Targets For The 2021 Recruiting Cycle



Over the course of the next week the staff of Buckeye Sports Bulletin will take a position-by-position look at Ohio State's current roster, as well as commitments and top targets from the 2021 recruiting class.

Up next are the linebackers.

Roster Breakdown

Ohio State lost just one linebacker from last season's group in Malik Harrison, who was drafted by the Baltimore Ravens in the third round of the 2020 NFL Draft.

The Buckeyes linebacker unit heading into next season is a veteran group, headlined by seniors Tuf Borland and Pete Werner, with Borland likely becoming the second three-time captain in program history, with quarterback J.T. Barrett being the only other player to match that feat.

Borland will still be a key member of the rotation at the inside linebacker, and while Werner has played outside each of his first three seasons, he was seen practicing at the inside position, and could be rotated around after showing his versatility at the Bullet position brought in by linebackers coach Al Washington and co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison.

Baron Browning will also be returning for his senior season, and will likely be moving to the outside to replace Harrison. Ohio State also brings back Justin Hilliard for a sixth year, and has impeccable depth with Teradja Mitchell, Dallas Gant and K'Vaughan Pope.

Past that strong group, members like Craig Young and Tommy Eichenberg are a pair of underclassmen looking to make more of an impact, while the Buckeyes also bring in a pair of linebackers in four-star inside linebacker Cody Simon and four-star outside backer Mitchell Melton, while four-star safety Kourt Williams could also move into the Bullet position.

Current Commits

Ohio State has one commit at linebacker in its top-ranked 2021 class, and that is with Ironton, Ohio four-star inside linebacker Reid Carrico.

Carrico committed to the Buckeyes on Sept. 10, making him the fifth member of the class. He is considered the second-best inside linebacker and No. 73 prospect overall in the 2021 class according to the 247Sports Composite Rankings.

According to 247Sports, Carrico finished his 2019 season with 168 tackles, three sacks, four forced fumbles and an interception. But the 6-3, 225-pound linebacker may also be joined by Cincinnati La Salle four-star safety Jaylen Johnson who, at 6-1, 200 pounds, is expected to fit the mold at the Bullet, and could be lined up at outside linebacker.

As a safety, Johnson is ranked as the 19th-best safety country, and the No. 349 prospect overall. Johnson is also ranked 11th in the state of Ohio, while Carrico is third.

Remaining Targets

The Buckeyes may be looking to add one more linebacker in the 2021 cycle, and that would likely come on the outside.

The first prospect to look at is Suwanne (Ga.) North Gwinnett four-star outside linebacker Barrett Carter, the No. 4 outside linebacker and No. 54 recruit overall in the class.

Ohio State made his top 11 along with Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Duke, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Florida, Florida State, LSU and Oklahoma, but the crystal ball predictions are listing the Tigers and Bulldogs as the current favorites.

Along with Carter, Ohio State may be looking at Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei five-star outside linebacker, and current LSU commit, Raesjon Davis. The Buckeyes are also looking at four-star cornerback Jaylin Davies out of Mater Dei, and a commitment there may help Ohio State's chances at also flipping Davies.

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