

Defensive Prospects Take Center Stage In Third Weekend Of Official Visits



Ohio State picked up just the third defensive commitment in the 2024 recruiting cycle on Monday with a verbal pledge from West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep four-star safety Jaylen McClain (6-0, 185), but the Buckeyes are hoping to continue momentum on that side of the ball with the list of official visitors expected this weekend.

The Buckeyes are set to host double-digit prospects over the weekend, with the majority on the defensive side of the ball. Starting off with the lone offensive prospects expected, Ohio State will host Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes four-star quarterback Air Noland (6-3, 195), who committed in April, and West Roxbury (Mass.) Catholic Memorial four-star offensive tackle Guerby Lambert (6-6, 280). Lambert is the No. 50 overall prospect and second-ranked tackle in the class.

On the defensive side, Ohio State will host three defensive linemen and seven in the secondary. Starting in the trenches, the Buckeyes will have Hoschton (Ga.) Mill Creek four-star defensive end King Joseph Edwards (6-5, 242), Buford, Ga., five-star defensive lineman Eddrick Houston (6-3, 255) and Washington (D.C.) Friendship Collegiate Academy five-star defensive end Dylan Stewart (6-5, 235).

While all are important visits, Houston would represent one of the biggest gets for defensive line coach Larry Johnson in recent memory. The Georgia product is the No. 19 overall prospect and fourth-ranked defensive lineman in the class, and his other top schools include Alabama, Clemson, Georgia and USC.

Houston has yet to take his official visit to Ohio State - though he previously visited last fall - but steam appears to be building for the Buckeyes, as 247Sports recruiting analyst Steve Wiltfong issued a crystal ball prediction earlier this week for Ohio State to land Houston's services. It's been a slow start to the cycle thus far for Johnson, who does not have a commitment yet on the defensive line, but progress with Houston - or Edwards or Stewart on the edge, for that matter - helps to begin building out the class.

Moving to the secondary, Ohio State will host a trio of cornerbacks: Waco (Texas) Connally five-star Kobe Black (6-0, 190), Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star Zabien Brown (6-0, 180) and Chandler (Ariz.) Basha four-star Miles Lockhart (5-10, 185).

Black is the most notable of the bunch, checking in as the No. 23 overall prospect and third-ranked

cornerback in the class, though Brown is not far behind at No. 62 nationally and No. 7 among corners. Ohio State, though, perhaps has the best shot at landing Lockhart, who was offered last summer and is viewed as a lean toward the Buckeyes ahead of his commitment on July 6.

Along with any combination of Black, Brown and Lockhart, Ohio State is also looking at Cleveland Glenville four-star cornerback Bryce West (5-11, 177) and Springfield, Ohio, four-star cornerback Aaron Scott (6-0, 170) in the class, though Michigan has picked up steam with Scott as of late.

The most important visitors of the weekend, though come at safety. That group includes Buford, Ga., five-star KJ Bolden (6-1, 185), Lancaster, Texas, four-star Corian Gipson (6-0, 170), Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star Jordon Johnson-Rubell (5-10, 180) and Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco four-star Peyton Woodyard (6-2, 188), who is committed to Georgia.

Bolden is the highest-rated of the bunch, checking in as the No. 7 overall prospect and top-ranked safety in the class, and Ohio State also has a built-in advantage in his recruitment given that he is the cousin of safeties coach Perry Eliano. Georgia, though, appears in the lead for the in-state prospect.

Woodyard is another significant piece of the puzzle for Ohio State, as he committed to Georgia in January but has since taken a number of visits to several different schools. He made a surprise visit to Columbus this spring - his first since visiting campus last fall before his commitment - and will return this weekend for his official visit, giving Ohio State's coaches another chance to sway the top-100 prospect.