

Film Friday: Air Noland Brings Aerial Assault To Columbus



There's a reason Fairburn (Ga.) Langston Hughes quarterback and Ohio State commit Air Noland picked up his fifth star in the 247Sports composite rankings recently.

C.J. Stroud just left Ohio State's coffers to be the second player selected in the 2023 NFL Draft and the team may have grabbed a commitment from a player with a similar ceiling when the 6-3 lefthander picked the Buckeyes April 8.

Tossing for 4,095 yards with 55 touchdowns and a mere four interceptions to guide Langston Hughes to a 15-0 record and a state championship in 2022, Noland's achievements at the high school level and a nod as one of the nation's Elite 11 quarterbacks have earned him plenty of buzz before his Ohio State career begins.

Now time to dive into the film and explore the traits that help Noland earn that above-mentioned fifth star. To view the full highlight reel these clips were pulled from, visit here:
<https://www.hudl.com/video/3/14585975/63a26e7abd6a4305741ac040>



Stating that any quarterback is reminiscent of Stroud, who closed his Ohio State career as a two-time finalist for the Heisman Trophy, might be unfair to both players regardless of who the prospect is. But Nolan's approach to throwing the ball is similar.

Stroud's touch was that of a professional pretty early on in his tenure in Columbus. He didn't usually impress by zipping the ball in with superior arm strength, rather he'd drop throws over defenders with perfect placement. Ohio State fans got in the habit of seeing him make perfect tosses over the shoulder of Marvin Harrison Jr. along the sideline for big gains.

Noland has a similar touch when he throws the ball. A throw like the one he makes in this clip does

require a good bit of arm strength — it travels 40 yards in the air with a lot of arc — but it's how he places the toss perfectly in front of his wide receiver to lead him into the endzone that makes this play so beautiful.

It's an excellent read as well. Both opposing safeties crash down on the short and intermediate routes in front of them, leaving the middle open deep.



When you talk about touch, another reason that it's important is something that Noland puts on display here: Layering.

Layering is the ability to throw a football over defenders and into your receiver's hands. Noland's touch again allows him to accomplish this, but it's also his timing. He throws the ball right as his man is passing the first level of pass coverage. He again leads his wideout perfectly and it results in a touchdown.

Something else to point out about Noland's throws that litters his tape is his tight spiral. The ball just looks pretty coming out of his release.



Now for some of the finer details of quarterbacking. One of two things is happening before Noland makes this throw. He's either looking off the safety to clear space in the middle of the field, or working through a progression to determine the best receiver to throw to.

Either shows a trait that will help him excel at the next level, polish in the first case and decision making in the second.

Whatever the intention of Noland's post-snap look to the right was, it did in fact move the opposition's boundary-side safety further toward the boundary and gave his receiver plenty of room in the middle to operate. Noland places another perfect pass to lead his pass catcher further upfield and ensure the catch is uncontested.



This final clip shows how Noland can place the ball on intermediate routes, and it's a very well-delivered ball from the signal caller with another tight spiral despite two defenders being right in his face.

It's not an easy throw Noland makes here. Even professional quarterbacks will tell you fitting a ball in a tight window while your target is running full speed across the field and allowing him to catch it in-stride to run after the catch is no easy feat. And he had to throw off-platform due to the opposing team's pass rush.

Noland shows plenty of potential and is in a great place developmentally entering Columbus. He could compete to be the team's starter by his second season in 2025, particularly if Devin Brown and Kyle McCord have both previously left for the NFL Draft or the transfer portal.