

Film Friday: Deontae Armstrong A Formidable Zone Run Blocker



Every Friday, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will be taking some time to break down Ohio State's recruiting class of 2024 on film to see what each prospect brings to Columbus. Reviews will take place in the order in which prospects verbally committed to the Buckeyes.

Last week's edition of Film Friday gave us a glimpse into Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward four-star interior offensive lineman Devontae Armstrong.

When Armstrong gave his pledge to Ohio State, there was a second person alongside him — his twin brother Deontae, a four-star offensive tackle prospect, who himself verbally committed to the Buckeyes then.

Deontae (6-6, 280) is the higher-rated of the twins, slotting in as the nation's 327th-best prospect in the 247Sports composite. He's the No. 29 offensive tackle and No. 10 player out of Ohio, choosing the Buckeyes over offers from a bevy of schools including Georgia, Michigan, Michigan State, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

But what does the film say about his skill set? Let's take a look. To view the full highlight reel these clips were pulled from, visit here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0msKIQoGOO8>



Deontae Armstrong's feet are one of his biggest strengths, as was the case with his brother Devontae. The blocking scheme here is of similar design to what is most prevalent in Ohio State's offense, a wide zone with all five offensive linemen stepping the same direction and attempting to seal off the defense play-side. The play itself is a jet sweep.

What Armstrong shows here are the tools of an imposing blocker in zone and wide-zone concepts. Zone blocking schemes are about blocking a "spot" rather than a specific player, basically whoever enters one's lane is his assignment. Armstrong quickly identifies the motion of the opposing linebacker as drifting into his.

Not to interject my own playing days into this evaluation, but when I played offensive line (note: not nearly to the caliber of a D-1 program let alone Ohio State), these types of second-level blocks were

perhaps the weakest area of my game. It's easy to overcommit to one direction or another, go where the linebacker is instead of where he's going to be and all of a sudden he's flying underneath you or around you to make a tackle.

That doesn't happen to Armstrong here. He displays fantastic lateral movement, keeping his shoulders square to the defender, matching his strafe as he strings out the play. When they collide at the point of attack, Armstrong drops his hips and explodes through to pancake his man, showing excellent footwork in space.



Here is another example of Armstrong's excellent feet being put to use in the zone running game. He bodies up the opposing defensive end and drives with a rapid chop, overwhelming the player with both his strength and his push.

Armstrong then swings his hips around to seal off the defender, widening the running lane to a canyon for his back, allowing for a long run. These are the types of fine details that separate players as run blockers.

That said, as with any prospect, there's work to be done for Armstrong. It's hard to argue with the results when they're next to perfect, but he's going to need to come off the line of scrimmage with a lower pad level and more aggression against collegiate defensive ends. He's a bit straight up out of his stance on this play. There's always a delicate balance linemen have to strike in that regard when zone blocking because of the above-mentioned undefined assignments. Overall, his pad level is something to work on.



Pass blocking highlights were scarce on Armstrong's reel, but the ones that were available show a player with potential but that will need development if he's to deal with the speed and power some of the nation's best can bring at the next level.

With his feet, strength and arm length, and his affinity for Ohio State, Armstrong definitely be built into a sturdy protector with Ohio State offensive line coach Justin Frye. While this clip finishes in a pancake, though, it comes after Armstrong's man collapsed the pocket and forced St. Edward's quarterback off his spot.

Armstrong's first step or two is good, he's got a strong base and a good stance for kick-sliding. Problems arise in his timing and at the point of contact. Especially against a player he can physically overpower, he retreats for too long instead of initiating contact after a few kick-slides when he had his man squared up. The defender gets a better angle on the quarterback and starts bending around Armstrong as a result.

Armstrong's hands are also too far outside, and he could have easily been flagged for holding on this play. Particularly if the defensive lineman had continued upfield.

All in all, Armstrong's physical tools are that of an eventual starter, a quality one, at Ohio State. It's just going to be about taking the steps to get there.