

Film Friday: Garrett Stover Shows Short-Area Athleticism, Play Recognition Skills



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.

Film Friday is back to take a look at Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut four-star linebacker Garrett Stover, the second player to pledge his services to Ohio State in the class of 2024 that remains with the Buckeyes as of this story.

Previous edition: Ian Moore Brings Athleticism, Punch To OSU Offensive Line

Stover is the cousin of current Ohio State tight end Cade Stover, who enters his second year as the team's starter at the position following one of the better seasons from a tight end in the program's recent history.

Issuing his verbal pledge Nov. 21, Garrett Stover is the first of two linebacker commitments obtained thus far by defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Jim Knowles, who has since enlisted the help of former Ohio State and eight-year NFL linebacker James Laurinaitis.

The 6-0, 195-pound prospect is considered the 12th-best linebacker in the country per the 247Sports composite rankings, the No. 138 recruit regardless of position and No. 5 player from the state of Ohio. While the plan seems to be for him to open his collegiate career at linebacker, he has the body type to slide back to safety if need be.

Here's a look at what his junior highlight film shows about his game. Those that want to view the full video these clips were pulled from can visit here:

<https://www.hudl.com/video/3/11443011/6373149f5b3d6b0a108e7dc2>



Stover plays a good mix of safety and linebacker for his high school squad at Big Walnut, allowing him to use his athleticism all over the field defensively. He'll often come down into the box to support the run defense or blitz, as he does here, which gives a great preview of some of his best qualities at linebacker.

The first thing that pops on film is his short-area quickness and agility. In this clip, Stover tries to time a blitz up but shows his hand early thanks to some well-timed motion from the opposing offense. What he does instead, in a high-IQ move, is fake as though his blitz is coming through B-gap, flashing his hips to the right quickly, before knifing through A-gap for an easy tackle for loss.

It's his deceptive movement immediately after the snap that fools the opposing offensive linemen. His agility sharpens the effects. From there, all he does is follow the pulling offensive guard to the ball and strike into the running back.

Watching many similar plays on his film, it's impressive to see how quickly he can invade an opposing backfield, arriving in a sudden fashion.



This clip puts Stover's short-area athleticism on display again, but also highlights his football IQ.

The option is often one of the best ways to counteract an opposing defender who is giving a team problems in the box, and that's what Zanesville tried to employ against Stover here. On this inverted veer look, the quarterback is reading Stover to see which way he commits, handing the ball to the running back if Stover sticks inside to defend the keeper or pulling it and running himself if Stover continues outside or crashes down with the running back.

But Stover recognized the play and defended both options. He starts by holding onto the edge of the line of scrimmage and strafing, appearing to be locked on the quarterback, but then uses his quickness to track down the running back once the ball is handed off. He finishes the play with a textbook rugby-style roll tackle.



Stover shows great football IQ for his age, his athleticism in short spaces stands out and by playing the edge a lot for the Golden Eagles he's developed a good bit of bend to help him get around offensive linemen.

One thing he'll need to add at the next level is size. He certainly doesn't shy away from contact, but bigger running backs — they'll be bigger in college than the one that knocked him back in this clip, which should be noted is a good play overall from Stover — will give him issues if he doesn't add at least 20 pounds of muscle, maybe more.

A collegiate strength and conditioning program like that run by Mickey Marotti should be more than capable, but it will take some time. Adding that size and strength is also important for stacking and shedding offensive linemen when offenses try to run downhill. And many of them do in the Big Ten.

Other than the knockback he's dealt, it should be reiterated Stover makes a great play here. He reads the running back's movement perfectly and crashes downhill for the stop. And he's able to get the bigger back down by himself thanks to his physicality and tackling technique.



Closing on this clip, this is a great showing of Stover's ability to play sideline-to-sideline. It's a demonstration of both a great mentality and athletic ability.

Stover recognizes a pass play as the offensive linemen sit back into their sets, immediately shifting his eyes to the innermost receiver who's swinging out to his right. He runs more than the width of the hashes to track the play down, working downhill but keeping his helmet ahead of the receiver's front him to ensure a proper angle.

The pass-catcher may have picked up a first down on the play, but he took a blow in the process.