

# Five Notable Recruiting Battles Between Alabama And Ohio State



Since the beginning of the internet recruiting era in 2010, no program has recruited better than Alabama. In fact, the Crimson Tide have finished atop the 247Sports team recruiting rankings in eight of the last 10 recruiting cycles and finished no worse than fifth.

In that same time period, Ohio State has finished second in the team rankings on three occasions (2013, 2017 and 2018) and in the top seven every year except 2019, when the Buckeyes signed just 17 players including five-stars Zach Harrison, Garrett Wilson and Harry Miller and finished 14th. For comparison's sake, Alabama signed 27 players that cycle to finish first.

But, interestingly enough, the Buckeyes and Crimson Tide have only gone head-to-head for a handful of players in recent years. So with that being said, we've decided to take a look at four recruiting battles that have shaped this year's College Football Playoff National Championship and one that might determine any future meetings between the two programs.

## **Shaun Wade - Class of 2017**

Wade, a former five-star cornerback from Jacksonville Trinity Christian, committed to Ohio State on Jan. 12, 2015, the night the Buckeyes captured the inaugural College Football Playoff National Championship. He continued to take visits over the next two years, though, which is why many anticipated a flip to Alabama late in the process.

Wade's mother was born in Tuscaloosa and was a self-proclaimed diehard fan of the Crimson Tide, and an official visit to Alabama for the Iron Bowl seemingly him trending away from Ohio State. But he shot down any rumors of a flip when he reaffirmed his commitment and signed with the Buckeyes a few weeks later.

## **Nicholas Petit-Frere - Class of 2018**

After missing out on in-state five-star offensive tackle Jackson Carman, who signed with Clemson during the Early Signing Period, Ohio State set its sights on Petit-Frere, a five-star from Tampa Berkeley Prep.

Petit-Frere's recruitment was believed to be a battle between Alabama and Florida at the time, but the Buckeyes made a late push thanks to then-defensive coordinator and area recruiter Greg Schiano,

whose sons attended Petit-Frere's high school when Schiano was the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. An official visit to Columbus on the final weekend before the traditional National Signing Day sealed the deal, however.

### **Jordan Battle - Class of 2019**

Battle, a former four-star cornerback from Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas, committed to Ohio State over the summer heading into his senior season thanks, in part, to his relationship with then-cornerbacks coach Taver Johnson. But the Buckeyes struggled defensively that season, which ultimately led to Johnson's departure, and he flipped to Alabama during the Early Signing Period.

Battle moved to safety and played a significant role for the Crimson Tide as a true freshman. Now in his sophomore season, he enters the national championship third on the team with 63 tackles and tied for fourth with four pass break ups.

### **Julian Fleming - Class of 2020**

Though most believed he would end up at Penn State thanks to his proximity to campus, Fleming - a former five-star wide receiver from Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia - also took visits to Alabama, Clemson and Ohio State during his junior year.

Fleming ultimately connected with Buckeyes wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, which led to his commitment in May 2019, whereas the Crimson Tide fell out of the running when then-co-offensive coordinator and wide receivers coach Josh Gattis moved on to Michigan.

### **J.T. Tuimoloau - Class of 2021**

Tuimoloau, a five-star defensive end from Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic recently trimmed his extensive list of scholarship offers to Alabama, Ohio State, Oregon, Washington and USC.

Tuimoloau has never been to Columbus, but his relationship with defensive line coach Larry Johnson, freshman wide receiver Gee Scott (his former high school teammate) and five-star wide receiver signee and fellow Washington native Emeka Egbuka is a big reason why the Buckeyes are the perceived favorite in his recruitment. He has visited Alabama, however, as he camped with the Crimson Tide following his sophomore year of high school. How much of an impact that trip made on his recruitment remains to be seen, however.

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