My Thoughts: Johnson's Selection Could Help Propel Offensive Tackle Recruiting

It's been since Paris Johnson's signing in the class of 2020 that Ohio State landed an offensive tackle ranked among the nation's top 100 high school prospects in the 247Sports composite.

Findlay, Ohio four-star Luke Montgomery cracked the top 100 in the class of 2022, but he fell into the category of interior offensive linemen on 247's site. Same for Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal's Donovan Jackson, a five-star in the class of 2021.

One of the hopes of the team's coaching staff, to be sure, is that Johnson's selection as the No. 6 pick in the 2023 NFL Draft helps change that going forward.

Simply put, there were major lapses in offensive tackle recruiting at the end of former offensive line coach Greg Studrawa's tenure.

OSU took two additional offensive tackles alongside Johnson in the 2020 class, three-stars Grant Toutant of Warren (Mich.) De La Salle Collegiate and Trey Leroux of Norwalk, Ohio. Four years into their respective Ohio State careers, neither seem able to so much as crack the two-deep depth chart in Columbus.

The Buckeyes whiffed on big-time target after big-time target in 2021, including Fairfax (Va.) Robinson Secondary five-star Tristan Leigh, only able to snag one offensive tackle in Floyds Knobs (Ind.) Floyd Central four-star Zen Michalski, a late riser who ranked 306th nationally at the end of the cycle.

Michalski remains in an open competition with class of 2022 four-star Tegra Tshabola of West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West, the highest-ranked commit the Buckeyes have gotten at offensive tackle since Johnson, but neither looked like world beaters in spring practice.

But it's no secret that development is one of the top factors for prospects when it comes to picking their

school. This is the first Ohio State offensive tackle selected in the first two rounds of the draft since Taylor Decker went 16th overall in the first round to the Detroit Lions in 2016, and the highest a Buckeye tackle has been drafted period since Orlando Pace went first overall in 1997, the last tackle taken in the first round before Decker.

What also isn't a secret is that it takes time to forge relationships and win battles in the recruiting world, more than just one cycle. Entering his second season at Ohio State, offensive line coach Justin Frye is looking for an uptick in terms of talent acquisition at offensive tackle in 2024, having already landed a marquee interior offensive lineman in New Palestine, Ind. four-star Ian Moore (6-5, 295). Moore is the nation's No. 97 overall prospect and No. 6 interior offensive lineman.

Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward four-star Deontae Armstrong (6-6, 280) committed alongside his twin to give the Buckeyes the nation's 323rd-best prospect and 29th-best OT, but larger prizes are still out there.

Topping the list is Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei four-star Brandon Baker (6-5, 285) the nation's No. 1 offensive tackle who misses the cut as a five-star by two spots as the nation's No. 32 prospect in the composite. He's already scheduled an official visit to Ohio State for June 9.

Then there's the nation's second-best offensive tackle, who also has interest in Ohio State. That's West Roxbury (Mass.) Catholic Memorial four-star Guerby Lambert, ranked 44th overall in the class of 2024.

If Ohio State can snag Baker, Lambert or a tackle of a similar caliber, it would go a long way to re-establish some momentum recruiting the position. The hope is that Johnson has now put some proof in the pudding.