

National Signing Day: Where Ohio State Stands With Top 3 Targets As 2019 Recruiting Class Winds Down



On the eve of National Signing Day, Ohio State's 2019 recruiting class is all but settled before Wednesday. The Buckeyes inked 15 letters of intent during the Dec. 19-21 early signing period, setting the scene for few spots left but with top targets to polish off the group.

After the Ryan Day Radio Show airs live on 97.1 The Fan in Columbus, live from the Wexner Trophy lobby in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center between noon and 1 p.m., the head coach is slated to meet with the media for a press conference until 1:30 p.m. in OSU's team room.

Before and after Day takes the lectern, three players — all offensive linemen — have announcement ceremonies at their respective high schools as they all consider Ohio State with other finalists in the mix. As the 24-hour mark nears for those commitment decisions, BSB looks into each situation and examines where the Buckeyes stand before OSU fully turns the page to the classes of 2020 and 2021.

Enokk Vimahi

The earliest decision comes from Ohio State's latest target. Kahuku, Hawaii, four-star offensive guard Enokk Vimahi, who earned an offer Jan. 4 from the Buckeyes while in San Antonio for the All-American Bowl, is slated to announce at 12:30 p.m. ET. OSU is among four finalists with Oklahoma, Notre Dame and Southern California.

Ohio State entered the race for the 6-4 1/2, 263-pounder despite its recent arrival. With ancestry from Samoa and Tonga, Vimahi originally scheduled his commitment for Jan. 19 at the Polynesian Bowl in Honolulu, where he would have chosen between a top three of the Sooners, Fighting Irish or Trojans before the Buckeyes locked up an official visit Jan. 25-27. Vimahi came away from the trip to Columbus impressed and gave OSU serious consideration as he approached the last two weeks of his process.

While credit is due to Day, director of player personnel Mark Pantoni and all others involved at Ohio State for the late push, the Buckeyes' catch-up game is complicated. Vimahi's camp has made things

clear throughout January about the 247Sports composite's No. 124 overall prospect, No. 7 offensive guard and No. 2 player in Hawaii having a wide-open recruitment, but Los Angeles is a lot closer to Kahuku than Columbus. Island kids will always be a tough out for teams like OSU, as well as OU (Jan. 11-13 official visit) and even ND (Sept. 1 official visit), but USC (Dec. 14-16 official visit) remains the betting favorite with 94 percent of predictions in the 247Sports Crystal Ball.

The Ohio State University ☐☐☐ #GoBucks pic.twitter.com/EeLPY8pR0P

— Enokk "Inokk" Vimahi (@enokkvimahi) January 28, 2019

Doug Nester

Ohio State's longest-tenured commitment since Aug. 5, 2017, four-star offensive guard Doug Nester's future-Buckeye status dwindles 17 months into being a part of the 2019 class. The 6-6 1/2, 305-pounder grew up an OSU fan from Huntington (W.Va.) Spring Valley and remained solid to head coach Urban Meyer after Georgia (Jan. 22) and Penn State (Feb. 14) offered last year. He had actually already set up early enrollment with his high school guidance counselors and was simply counting down the days until the 2019 spring semester came before he packed his bags for the next chapter in Columbus.

However, Meyer announced his retirement Dec. 4 and Day assumed his elevation Jan. 2, making the time before in December and after in January a wild road for Ohio State and Nester. At his Dec. 5 All-American Bowl jersey presentation in Huntington, Nester called off early enrollment with the Buckeyes as he delayed signing from Dec. 19 to Feb. 6 and sorted through the options. Nester remained committed to OSU, officially visiting the weekends of Dec. 7-9 and Jan. 18-20 but giving strong looks elsewhere as Penn State (Dec. 16 unofficial visit, Jan. 25-27 official visit) and Virginia Tech (Feb. 1-3 official visit) got the 247Sports composite's No. 106 overall prospect, No. 6 offensive guard and No. 2 player in West Virginia on campus.

While the past two months appeared to have set the stage for a two-horse race between Ohio State and the Nittany Lions — the Bulldogs supposed to get an official visit early in January before Nester called off the trip and essentially eliminated UGA from contention — the Hokies made the most of their last shot as they emerged from the past weekend in position for the flip. Although the activity can be traced to the Buckeyes and PSU, especially between the recent in-home visits used by the respective coaching staffs, Nester has quietly considered VT dating back to his commitment when he had it heavily in the mix of an original top five with OSU, Alabama, Florida and West Virginia. With the 247Sports Crystal Ball tilted to 69 percent of predictions in favor of Virginia Tech, Ohio State and Penn State appear to be on the outside looking in as Nester's announcement for 5 p.m. approaches.

Very Honored and Blessed to announce that I have received an offer from The Ohio State University☐☐☐ #GoBucks pic.twitter.com/kW4P9N1dg0

— Doug Nester (@Freshie74) March 9, 2017

Dawand Jones

Will Ohio State go 0 for 3? The Buckeyes should escape a nightmare scenario of swinging and missing at their position of need when Indianapolis Ben Davis three-star offensive tackle Dawand Jones announces at 6 p.m. OSU is among a final five of Florida, Indiana, Penn State and Southern California.

The 6-8, 360-pounder emerged throughout the end of the fall among the best offensive linemen available in the 2019 class with intrigue beyond the 247Sports composite's rankings as the No. 1,039 overall prospect, No. 88 offensive tackle and No. 13 player in Indiana. A two-sport star in basketball, Jones' future quickly favored football when Ohio State and others entered the equation between November and December. The Buckeyes extended an offer Nov. 21 to Jones when he was on campus for his unofficial visit, taking in practice at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center and seeing Ohio Stadium.

Jones officially visited the Trojans the weekend of Nov. 7-9 and spent two of his remaining five available with OSU (Jan. 19-21) and the Nittany Lions (Jan. 25-27). The Hoosiers have also been pushing hard for Jones, who teased Jan. 30 on Twitter the idea of playing football and basketball for home-state IU. PSU and USC have been in the picture, but OSU — with 90 percent of the predictions in the 247Sports Crystal Ball — appears to have prioritized Jones most between Day and offensive line coach Greg Studrawa, who know they need him in their group.

#GoBuckeyes  pic.twitter.com/3Z1zcnmLeu

— Dawand Jones (@dawand_jones) January 21, 2019

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