

Ohio State Makes Further Impression On Damarion Witten



Ohio State wants to finally haul in two tight ends in one recruiting class, trying but failing to do so in cycles prior to this year's.

The Buckeyes haven't been able to sign two line-reinforcers in one cycle since 2016, despite having two verbally committed at some point in both the 2022 and 2023 classes before ultimately losing one tight end to decommitment in each case.

With Chattanooga (Tenn.) Baylor School four-star Max LeBlanc (6-3, 222) already in the fold, a clear top target to join him has emerged over the course of the recruiting process: Cleveland Glenville four-star Damarion Witten.

Wednesday Ohio State got another chance to make an impression on Witten when he attended the fourth of five one-day recruiting camps hosted at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, and tight ends coach Keenan Bailey made sure to make more in-roads.

"My biggest takeaway from camp was how Coach Key really singled me out, because I told him I wanted to improve on my speed cuts and my blocking," Witten told BSB. "He pulled me to the side, one-on-one, showed me some things. It was just by myself improving my blocking and my route running."

Witten was seen doing a lot of sled work for that above-mentioned tooling of his blocking game, receiving instruction not just from Key but from Ohio State senior tight end Cade Stover, returning for his second year as the team's starter after hauling in 36 passes for 406 yards and five touchdowns. It was the most receptions by an OSU tight end since Rickey Dudley had 37 in 1995.

"He was just telling me that it's fairly easy once you learn the game, but you've still got to put the work in," Witten said. "Once you put the work in, the game will come easy to you. So I really took that to heart because me being the person I am, just having Cade Stover say anything to you, giving you any tips is a big deal."

Bailey's been working the Witten angle since he first got promoted from his former graduate assistant role to be the team's full-time tight ends coach.

The No. 346 prospect nationally, No. 19 tight end and No. 11 player out of Ohio in the 247Sports composite still has other suitors for his services. His top five includes Kentucky, Oregon, Texas and Wisconsin alongside the Scarlet and Gray. He took an official visit to Kentucky immediately following his camp at Ohio State. The Wildcats are considered the Buckeyes' biggest competition in his recruitment.

That said, Bailey has been working Witten since the instant he was promoted.

"The day he got the job, he hit me up and told me, 'I want you. You're No. 1 on my (recruiting) board and I'm not going to stop recruiting you until you're a Buckeye,'" Witten said. "For me, that was a big deal because I've never had anyone tell me that I was No. 1 and that I'm needed."

In deciding what his ultimate destination will be, the environment around a program is the most important factor for Witten.

"The culture," Witten said. "The coaching staff, the way the coaching staff treats the recruits, players and the way that the position coach can develop you into a young man and a young student-athlete."