

Ohio State Running Back Depth, Commitments And Targets Breakdown For The 2021 Recruiting Cycle



Over the course of the next week the staff of Buckeye Sports Bulletin will take a position-by-position look at Ohio State's current roster, as well as commitments and top targets from the 2021 recruiting class.

Up next are the running backs.

Roster Breakdown

J.K. Dobbins broke Eddie George's Ohio State single-season record for rushing yards in a season in 2019 and became the second-leading rusher in school history, behind only Archie Griffin. The 2020 Buckeyes must replace Dobbins, who was selected in the second round by the Baltimore Ravens in the NFL draft.

The presumed heir to the prestigious No. 1 tailback spot appeared to be Master Teague, who ranked seventh in the Big Ten with 789 rushing yards behind Dobbins as a redshirt freshman last season. The talented back from Murfreesboro, Tenn., suffered an undisclosed injury, which held him out of the spring, and is still on the mend.

Without Teague healthy, the Buckeyes' only healthy scholarship running back was Steele Chambers, who will be a redshirt freshman after playing in just three games during 2019. Sophomore tailback Marcus Crowley was still recovering from an injury in the spring, while incoming freshman Miyan Williams had not yet enrolled at Ohio State.

Ryan Day and the Buckeyes turned to the transfer portal to address the injury-plagued running back position, bringing in former Oklahoma tailback Trey Sermon, who showed playmaking abilities throughout his injury-riddled Sooner career.

Numbers-wise, Ohio State should be fine after Sermon's first and final season, with Teague, Chambers, Crowley and Williams, but there is always a need for a game-changing back like Dobbins. Running backs coach Tony Alford, who is also the assistant head coach for offense, went out on the recruiting

trail and reeled in a pair of running backs with elite potential.

Current Commits

After bringing in Chambers and Crowley in the 2019 class, Alford and the Buckeyes did not garner commitments from some of their top 2020 targets at tailback. The only back they brought in was Williams, who was a three-star prospect out of Cincinnati Winton Woods.

Alford faced a lot of criticism of his recruiting ability and for what was perceived as him missing on the 2020 class. The running backs coach addressed all the talk about the 2020 class during an April 22 teleconference with media members.

“Let me say this, and I’m not going to lie to you, I get tired of talking about last year, quite frankly. Good, bad, or indifferent,” Alford said. “I’ll tell you this, next year I’ll get tired of talking about this class.

“But I will say this, if we want to talk about last year’s class, Miyan Williams is a really good player. I’m really excited to have Miyan Williams part of our room and our group and our football team. So, I want to make sure that that is very clear.”

What had prompted the questions about the previous recruiting class was the success Alford has had in the 2021 cycle. Alford and the Buckeyes did not just earn the commitment of one top-five running back in the country for 2021, they locked up two.

Cornelius (N.C.) William Amos Hough four-star running back Evan Pryor committed to Ohio State on March 16. The talented 5-foot-10, 190-pound Pryor is the nation’s No. 82 overall recruit and No. 5 running back, as well as the No. 4 recruit regardless of position in North Carolina.

Less than two weeks later, the rich got richer when Hopewell (Va.) five-star running back TreVeyon Henderson committed to the Scarlet and Gray on March 27. At 5-foot-11 and 195 pounds, Henderson is the No. 18 overall recruit and No. 1 tailback in the country, as well as the third-highest rated prospect in Virginia.

Remaining Targets

With the commitments of Pryor and Henderson already in hand, the Buckeyes do not have a big need at running back, especially with the returning scholarship backs on the roster each maintaining at least three years of eligibility remaining.

Decommitments are always a possibility, however, and depth at running back is essential given the high injury risk associated with the position.

The most likely legitimate target remaining on the Buckeyes’ radar is Cincinnati Roger Bacon four-star running back Corey Kiner. The 5-foot-10, 205-pound native Ohioan is a powerful back with excellent upside.

Kiner is the nation’s No. 10 running back and No. 163 overall prospect regardless of position. The Cincinnati native is the seventh-highest rated recruit in Ohio for 2021.

He has his commitment date set for July 4, but 50 percent of 247Sports’ Crystal Balls are undecided on

Kiner's destination. Michigan and Cincinnati each hold a 25-percent chance of landing Kiner, per 247Sports, but his recruitment is still far from decided.

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