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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

Feb. 14, 2015

# Clean Sweep

## Meyer Gets His Men On NSD

By RYAN GINN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Finishing is an art, and Urban Meyer has been painting masterpieces in 2015.

The Ohio State head coach shook off an early loss to Virginia Tech in the 2014 season, developing an unstoppable machine that ran through the likes of Wisconsin, Alabama and Oregon in consecutive games to bring home a national championship.

Likewise, a slow start on the recruiting trail yielded to a furious finish. It took until May 27, a time at which most elite programs were already hitting double digits on the commit totals, for Ohio State to collect its third verbal commitment. But when the final fax rolled in at around 11 a.m. on Feb. 4,

Meyer had compiled the nation's No. 8 class and the top group of recruits in the Big Ten.

He was aided by a 5 for 5 finish on National Signing Day that not only added two uncommitted recruits but also kept three wavering verbal commits in the fold. Greenbelt (Md.) Eleanor Roosevelt four-star offensive tackle Isaiah Prince chose Ohio State over Alabama and Maryland, while North Little Rock, Ark., four-star wide receiver K.J. Hill chose the Buckeyes over the Crimson Tide and Arkansas. Both decommitted in January (Hill from Arkansas and Prince from Alabama) before winding up in Columbus.

While Meyer was able to close on them, Prince and Hill likely wouldn't have been Buckeyes were it not for the work of a pair of first-year Ohio State assistants. Defensive line coach Larry Johnson Sr. handles the Maryland and Washington, D.C., area, while Hill had previously been recruited by co-defensive coordinator Chris Ash when he was a Razorbacks assistant.



JOSH WINSLOW

**ANOTHER GOOD HAUL** – Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer (left) signed the No. 8 recruiting class for 2015 as ranked by Scout.com. The 27-man group is also the best in the Big Ten.

"Prince was a battle," Meyer said. "It was a street fight until signing day. I think he's a great fit – a great player that a lot of people wanted.

"K.J. Hill was interesting. He committed early. He was on our radar. Chris knew his family, he was telling us what great people they are. He was a receiver. He liked how we do things. And I think the national championship helped a little bit. He saw we lost two upperclassmen, too, and he watched very closely with what we do with the receivers. I think he jumped in because of the actual receiver play."

**BSB's 2015 Recruiting Wrap-Up Edition**

Those schools couldn't keep their wavering prospects, and Meyer showed that he could. Three of OSU's commits were having second thoughts on the night before National Signing Day, but all three sent in their letters of intent to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. Detroit Cass Tech three-star defensive tackle Joshua Alabi was the first of the three to make it official, followed by Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage four-star quarterback Torrance Gibson and Alabi's prep teammate, four-star running back Mike Weber.

Gibson was perhaps the most coveted player in the class, and his impending arrival in Columbus is nothing short of a huge win for Meyer. Still, the coach had to sweat it out along with wide receivers coach Zach Smith, who handles south

Florida recruiting for the Buckeyes and served as Gibson's recruiter for much of the process.

The nation's No. 6 quarterback and No. 52 overall prospect took official visits to Auburn, LSU and Miami (Fla.) on the last three weekends of the recruiting cycle. Smith didn't view this as a negative, believing that those schools wouldn't be able to live up to the standard set by Ohio State.

"My mentality in recruiting is – and it's not just because they pay my paycheck – I believe Ohio State is different than anywhere else," Smith said. "I know it is because I grew up here and I've loved this university since the time I was an infant. So when Torrance Gibson says he wants to go elsewhere, in my opinion that is just going to help sell us because he is going to go see these other places and see that they're really cool and really good, but they're just not Ohio State. In the end, that's what happened."

Weber and Alabi presented an entirely different situation. While Gibson appeared to have just been enjoying his final month as a recruit, the prospects from the University of Michigan pipeline school seemed to be having serious doubts about their choices to be Buckeyes.

Alabi was rumored to be considering Miami (Fla.) but all eyes were on Weber, who was being recruited relentlessly by new Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh. When both decided to stick with Ohio State and pen met paper, Meyer had claimed his second and third Cass Tech signees in two years after OSU had previously gone eight years without signing a Technician.

Continued On Page 6

COVER STORY

# Current Buckeyes Help Bring In New Teammates

Continued From Page 1

Meyer was happy to dish out credit for the work done by others in bringing in the aforementioned five players. In addition to the coaching staff, he gave a lot of love to

his players. Early enrollee Jashon Cornell, a four-star defensive end out of St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall, was put to work early in his Ohio State career. Cornell, along with freshman running back Curtis Samuel, hosted Prince on his official visit

the weekend of Jan. 24. Meyer called out sophomore running back Ezekiel Elliott for his help with Weber's recruitment.

"Once again I think it was our players," Meyer said. "I don't think, I know. Mike Weber is not at Ohio State without Ezekiel. I don't think it happens - I don't think, I know it doesn't happen.

"I attribute it to believing in what you're selling. It's a really good place with a lot of momentum, and our players right now are bought in. That's the cool thing. You walk out there to mat drills this morning, you see the weight room and the attendance, it's been great with Coach (Mickey) Marotti. There's a lot of momentum right now at Ohio State."

The pursuit of those five players made for a long night for Meyer, who spent the night connected to his phone while he worked with his assistants to lock down all five prospects. Half a lifetime ago, he said, he might

have enjoyed the thrill of the chase and the all-night phone sessions. But at age 50, he enjoyed only the end result.

## Near And Far

That Meyer was able to salvage the quality of the 2015 class with his trademark closing flourish might have been the only typical thing about this recruiting cycle. From the outset, it became clear that assembling this group wouldn't come easily.

There were no five-star prospects in this class, the first time that's happened in the Scout.com era dating back to the class of 2002. That streak would have ended one year earlier had Cincinnati Moeller linebacker Sam Hubbard not received the bump up to five-star status in the final rankings adjustment of that recruiting cycle. Gibson came the closest of any signee, finishing 15 spots out of five-star status.

There were also no players from Cleveland Glenville, the first time since 2001 that the Tarblooders haven't had a player sign with Ohio State. The highest-ranked prospect from the storied program was two-star linebacker Justice Hart, the No. 110 overall prospect in Ohio who ultimately signed with Bowling Green. In 2014, the Tarblooders sent three prospects - safety Erick Smith, cornerback Marshon Lattimore and offensive lineman Marcelys Jones - to OSU.

It was an atypical year for Ohio as a whole.

The Buckeyes missed out on the Nos. 2 and 3 prospects in the state, as Hubbard running back L.J. Scott signed with Michigan State and Lakewood St. Edward defensive back Shaun Crawford signed with Notre Dame. Cincinnati St. Xavier four-star linebacker Justin Hilliard, the No. 1 player in the state, required an incredible amount of work from the Buckeyes' staff to pull him away from an early lean toward Notre Dame. Likewise, Cleveland Benedictine four-star linebacker Jerome Baker unexpectedly committed to Florida in July, forcing OSU

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## COVER STORY



JOSH WINSLOW

**STATING HIS CASE – Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer (center), seen here addressing campers at July's Friday Night Lights event at Ohio Stadium, kept six of the top 10 Ohio prospects in the Buckeye State.**

to chase the state's No. 4 player for several more months before he ultimately pledged to the Buckeyes in late October.

Undeterred, Meyer still managed to snag six of the top 10 players in the state.

"It just happened to be a year where a couple of the top prospects were more open to the process and fit better at other schools," Scout.com recruiting analyst Allen Trieu said. "I don't think it was necessarily anything Ohio State did or didn't do to not get some of those guys."

In order to compensate for the rockier than usual outing in its home state, Ohio State turned up the heat in the traditional out-of-state hotbeds that it recruits. To do so, it turned to Johnson and Smith. Both have recruiting connections in the D.C./Maryland/Virginia metro area, and Smith also recruits Florida for the Buckeyes.

The Buckeyes pulled four players out of the Sunshine State – Gibson, Bradenton IMG Academy three-star offensive guard Mirko Jurkovic, Fort Lauderdale St. Thomas Aquinas three-star cornerback Damon Arnette and Cocoa three-star cornerback Jamel Dean. In addition to Prince, OSU pulled two more players out of the fertile DMV region – Woodbridge (Va.) C.D. Hylton four-star offensive guard Matthew Burrell and Burke (Va.) Lake Braddock three-star tight end A.J. Alexander.

"That's what you do it for though," Smith said. "To go to an area where you are just going to clean up, I guess that would be fun, but what I like is to go down to see Torrance Gibson on a Friday and there are three other schools coming in. It's like a game, it's a competitive atmosphere. There's a reason they're there ... because there are really talented players, so that's where I want to be. If I'm recruiting somewhere that there's not, I need a new area."

Like bears in a scarce winter, those Buckeyes spread out beyond even those territories into uncharted areas in search of prospects. Ohio State landed Sioux Falls (S.D.) Roosevelt three-star offensive tackle Grant Schmidt in June. Schmidt, an early enrollee, has already become the first South Dakotan to be a scholarship football player at Ohio State.

The Buckeyes added Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon three-star offensive tackle

Branden Bowen in November before plucking Hill from Arkansas on signing day. It is believed that Bowen and Hill would also be the first football letter winners from their respective states.

The Buckeyes managed to overcome any shortfalls in Ohio to sign a class that ballooned in size by the end of the cycle. With 12 Ohioans and 15 out-of-staters, it's a healthy mix of homegrown and imported talent. The well-stocked class put the Buckeyes firmly above the 85-scholarship threshold, but Meyer hinted on National Signing Day that the staff has accounted for injury-related attrition that hasn't been made public yet.

"There are a couple of guys who you're not sure if they can continue playing," Meyer said. "There are a couple of guys with two ACL injuries. You have to be aware.

"How aware am I of the roster? About as well as I can be. There's also the truth that you don't know for the next couple of weeks, couple of months, until you see what happens. You have to prepare. But you also can't do

the unthinkable, and that's be stuck with 87 scholarship players come June or July."

#### A Chance To Grow

Unlike previous signing day press conferences, when Meyer stressed the importance of the incoming freshmen being ready to play right away, the idea of early contribu-

tions was barely hinted at during Meyer's time in front of the media.

The Buckeyes are returning a slew of starters, and the two-deep was stocked with underclassmen during the national championship run. Talent or not, the sheer lack of opportunity doesn't bode well for members of the class of 2015. There will be opportunities on special teams and in backup reps taken late in blowout games, and it stands to reason that there could be a breakout player who earns a starting job, but the opportunities to see the field are not as great for this class as they were for its predecessors.

Given what it means, that's something that pleases Meyer.

"I hope so," he said when asked if freshmen might have trouble getting snaps. "That means you have a good team. Obviously if you've got a team, a bunch of true freshmen, you're probably getting your tail kicked in a little bit. I don't know. I think there's nothing quite like having a very good player behind a guy in front of you, to make you show up and go every day.

"Next year will be a very competitive group. There's a bunch of starters coming back. But there's a bunch of guys that signed a piece of paper who want to get a spot. They have the right. If they're better than the player, we don't worry about what you've done in the past. We try to create competition in everything, from the classroom to the off-season workouts to the summer workouts and obviously during spring and summer."

With the raw athleticism that is heavier in this class than previous ones, Ohio State has the luxury of waiting for those high-ceiling prospects to develop into potential starters in future seasons.

If there's one thing Meyer has shown, it's not the start but the finish that matters.



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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

## Ohio State Closes Class With Flourish

Ohio State head coach Urban Meyer stood at the lectern Feb. 4 in the team room of the Woody Hayes Athletic Center and smiled.

It would have been hard for him not to after a perfect performance on National Signing Day. Meyer said that in addition to the two uncommitted prospects – North Little Rock, Ark., four-star wide receiver K.J. Hill and Greenbelt (Md.) Eleanor Roosevelt four-star offensive tackle Isaiah Prince – the staff worried about possible defections from three committed players.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK

Ryan Ginn

By the end of the day, all were Buckeyes. In addition to picking up Hill and Prince, Meyer and his staff were able to rein in Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage four-star quarterback Torrance Gibson and a pair of Detroit Cass Tech prospects in four-star running back Mike Weber and three-star defensive tackle Joshua Alabi.

Still, the uncertainty made for some nervy moments among Ohio State assistants the night before. Cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs, who served as the primary recruiter for both Cass Tech prospects, dreaded the thought of having years of work undone on the final day but noted that it came with the territory.

“Great players get recruited very hard,” Coombs said. “That’s something we’re learning as the recruiting game continues to change. It’s going to be a battle, and kids are going to make decisions at the 11th hour and have uncertainty. Our job is to develop relationships that can withstand that because that’s hard for a kid. There are a lot of different things coming at them all at once, and it’s the biggest decision of their lives.”

The Buckeyes, led by Meyer, delivered emphatic success in each of those battles. What follows is a look at how those players

generated storylines on National Signing Day.

### Hill Spurns SEC, Picks Ohio State

Hill, the nation’s No. 32 receiver and No. 229 overall prospect, could have stayed close to home and played in the Southeastern Conference.

He was committed to Arkansas until January, and Alabama’s late push was shown to be serious when the Crimson Tide employed Biletnikoff Award winner Amari Cooper to try to recruit Hill via Twitter as signing day drew nearer. However, a connection with one-time Razorbacks assistant and current Buckeye assistant Chris Ash helped lead Hill to Columbus.

“He had committed to Arkansas and we stopped recruiting him out of respect to Arkansas, but at some point there they decided they wanted to reopen their recruitment and got back in touch with us,” Ash said. “It was a guy that Coach Meyer had a lot of liking to from the start, and we went back after him. Yes, I was the point man, but really it was Coach Meyer’s wide receiver expertise as a head coach that sold him on coming to Ohio State and it being the best fit.”

With Ohio State losing senior wide receivers Evan Spencer and Devin Smith, it was critical that the Buckeyes find a talented wideout to help replenish the receiving corps. They did just that with Hill, who has a knack for making appearances on the highlight reel.

“He is a playmaker, there’s no doubt about it,” Blake Pizan, Hill’s offensive coordinator at North Little Rock, told BSB. “Anytime he touches the football, good things happen. He’s a guy that is also not selfish. He understands sometimes if he’s getting double-teamed or if the defense is making sure they don’t let him beat them, then he’s not afraid to let other guys touch the football. He’s a guy that’s more worried about the team winning games. That’s his main concern.”

Hill’s flashy game also comes with a fundamental protection of the football, though. Pizan said his prized prospect’s ability to secure the pigskin allows him to aggressively fight defenders for extra yardage.

“The last two years, between practice and games, I think he might have put the ball on the ground maybe five times and that’s counting practice,” he said. “He protects it so well and he’s very good in traffic. He does everything to get those extra yards.”

### Prince Finds His Kingdom

A late visit from Prince turned into

### OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2016 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Jonathon Cooper	OLB	6-3	215	★★★★	Gahanna (Ohio) Lincoln
Tyler Gerald	OG	6-5	295	★★★★	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy
Jake Hausmann	TE	6-5	235	★★★★	Cincinnati Moeller
Kierre Hawkins	TE	6-4	220	★★★★	Maple Heights, Ohio
George Hill	RB	6-0	190	★★★★	Hubbard, Ohio
Kareem Walker	RB	6-1	210	★★★★★	Wayne (N.J.) DePaul

Players in the class of 2017 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Danny Clark	QB	6-4	205	★★★★	Massillon (Ohio) Washington
Bruce Judson	RB	5-10	171	★★★★	Cocoa, Fla.
Josh Myers	OT	6-5	285	★★★★★	Miamisburg, Ohio
Shaun Wade	CB	6-2	175	NR	Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian Acad.

recruiting gold for Ohio State offensive coordinator Ed Warinner.

Warinner, who will retain his offensive line coaching duties, may have found the heir apparent to left tackle Taylor Decker, who has one year of eligibility remaining. Prince is rated the No. 6 offensive tackle and No. 74 overall prospect in the class.

His Ohio State visit the weekend of Jan. 24 was hosted by freshman running back Curtis Samuel and 2015 early enrollee Jason Cornell, a four-star defensive end out of St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall. Prince also bonded with Meyer, Warinner and defensive line coach Larry Johnson Sr., who is responsible for recruiting the Washington, D.C., area.

“I think it was a great visit,” Prince said. “The coaches definitely showed a lot of love. Coach Meyer, Coach Johnson and Coach Warinner – those are some great people that I definitely trust.”

Meyer, for his part, gushed over Prince during his signing day press conference.

“Isaiah Prince, when you guys get to know him, there’s no better guy than that,” he said. “He has a wonderful family. His father is from Trinidad and just great, great people. He was a fit.”

### Gibson Part Of Two-QB Class

One of the reasons that Ohio State was able to land Gibson was the simplest: The Buckeyes offered him the chance to play quarterback, something not every school was willing to do.

With Gibson’s fax sent in and his leverage relinquished, Ohio State wide receivers coach Zach Smith was still adamant that any early playing time that Gibson might receive would be coming out of shotgun instead of out wide.

“Torrance is talented enough to play anything on the field,” Smith said of the nation’s No. 5 QB. “There’s a lot of ques-

tion about can he be a quarterback, is he an athlete, can he throw the ball? To be honest, the whole time we were kind of confused by the confusion (over his position). I watched him throw live in July, I’ve watched him throw live in practices in the spring, I watched him throw live in a game in the fall and then he goes out to the Army All-American game and they are talking about him as one of the best quarterbacks there. His future is nowhere but the quarterback position.”

He’ll join a crowded quarterbacks room that has ballooned to six scholarship players thanks to the additions of Gibson and fellow 2015 signal caller Joey Burrow out of The Plains (Ohio) Athens. Meyer is also high on Burrow, the nation’s No. 13 quarterback, after former offensive coordinator Tom Herman compared him to another Meyer protégé.

“I remember he was screaming into his phone as he’s watching this kid throw,” Meyer said. “He said, ‘I found your next Alex Smith.’ And you meet the kid and his family and it’s A1A. He’s a competitor, he wins. He wins at football. He wins at basketball. He’s a coach’s son. We’re real impressed with him.”

None of that dissuaded Gibson from becoming a Buckeye, though.

“Obviously with the production at the quarterback position, he wasn’t concerned, it wasn’t a negative for him,” Smith said. “He was getting worn out by a lot of coaches that were recruiting him at how talented we are at quarterback. At the end, this is the place that he wanted to be.”

### Cass Tech Train Keeps Rolling

For all of Coombs’ work as a Cincinnati recruiter, the job he’s done in Michigan may be even more impressive.

The additions of Weber and Alabi made three prospects in two years that Ohio State has pulled out of Detroit Cass Tech. Prior to that, the last time a Technician became a Buckeye occurred in 2004 when Vernon Gholston signed with OSU.

Coombs used the experience of cornerback Damon Webb, who played as a backup and on special teams as a true freshman in 2014, to sell Alabi and Weber on crossing the border.

“I think the strongest recruiting people in your school are your players and their parents,” he said. “If you have those players who have the connection with those same families at a high school, they’re going to be able to share their experiences. I always tell our recruits they should spend their time with our players when we’re not

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

Scout.com 2015 Team Rankings

Rk.	Team	Signees
1.	USC	26
2.	Alabama	23
3.	Auburn	27
4.	Tennessee	30
5.	Georgia	28
6.	Notre Dame	24
7.	Texas	28
8.	Ohio State	27
9.	UCLA	20
10.	Texas A&M	25
11.	Florida State	21
12.	LSU	25
13.	Penn State	25
14.	Oklahoma	24
15.	Clemson	24
16.	Mississippi	22
17.	Arizona State	23
18.	Michigan State	22
19.	Mississippi State	28
20.	South Carolina	28
21.	Oregon	22
22.	Arkansas	24
23.	Washington	24
24.	North Carolina	19
25.	Stanford	22

Handing Out Superlatives For OSU's 2015 Signees

Ohio State's class of 2015 is loaded with players at just about every position and from all corners of the country. There are players viewed as sure things and others who will need some seasoning and weight training to reach their potential.

With those discrepancies in mind, here are some of my superlatives and projections for the group that labeled itself "Elite '15."

**Most Likely To Succeed:** It's hard to pick against the most talented player here, and that's Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage four-star quarterback Torrance Gibson. For all the talk of him being dead-set on playing quarterback, there are others who believe he could end up at wide receiver, which is viewed as his best position. Whether he has the ball in his hands every snap or not, it's hard to bet against a guy with a knack for embarrassing defenders and delivering highlight-worthy plays.

**Future Captain:** There's one player who keeps getting mentioned as a future captain, and every conversation I've had with him backs up those thoughts. That person would be Cincinnati St. Xavier four-star linebacker Justin Hilliard, the face of the 2015 class and the player who organized the group text message that connected all of the commits throughout the process. Rated Ohio's top recruit, Hilliard comes from a great program and has maturity beyond his years. Woodbridge (Va.) C.D. Hylton four-star offensive guard Matthew Burrell would be a close runner-up in this category.

**First To The Field:** There won't be many obvious chances for the young Buckeyes to see the field right away, but Canton (Ohio) McKinley defensive back Eric Glover-Williams is my bet to fill the void at nickel that will appear if Armani Reeves' concussion issues keep him from playing in 2015. He's a prototypical defensive back for Chris Ash's pass defense and has a competitive streak greater than anyone else in this class.

**Late Bloomer:** When in doubt, bet on Warinner. Ohio State's miracle-working offensive coordinator saw something in Sioux Falls (S.D.) Roosevelt three-star offensive tackle Grant Schmidt that other coaches didn't. Schmidt has the size and lateral quickness that can't be taught among those who stand 6-6, 285. I'm betting Warinner fills in the blanks and Schmidt starts a full season at some point in his career.

**Sneaky Good:** When it came to evaluating Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne four-star defensive tackle Robert Landers, a late bloomer, Ohio State had a home-field advantage. Landers comes from the same school as Braxton Miller, just an hour away from Columbus, and rampaged his way through the playoffs with dominating play, helping his team earn a trip to Ohio Stadium for the OHSAA Division I state championship. His late-season play earned him four-star status, and the Buckeyes were able to swoop in and lock him up in December.

- Ryan Ginn

around, ask them all the things you want to know when we're not around, and we will stand on what they say.

"That's very valuable so when you have a kid like Damon Webb, his experience here is going to translate well to a kid back home, and I think that's been a positive experience. I think his family would tell you that and it's what they're sharing with the people back home."

The nature of the rivalry and the Michigan connections at that school made for many sleepless nights for members of the OSU staff as the seconds ticked down to signing day.

"We haven't slept a lot since Friday, the last day on the road, and that's real," Coombs said. "I've known these kids since they were sophomores in high school. They've come here and been on our campus, but at the same time there are a lot of tugs and pulls from their home state, and there should be. There's nothing wrong with that. We do the same thing here in Ohio, so was it a battle? Absolutely. Did they do everything they possible could to get those guys? Absolutely, and I think we've very fortunate."

"I think it was hard for those young men to walk up in front of the crowd in a conference center in the city of Detroit to sign their name to the Ohio State Buckeye paper. I admire them for that. And I think the point is we have players of courage and character here and we're recruiting those same kids, and because those kids have that same kind of courage and character they were able to do that."

Weber is the nation's No. 9-ranked back while Alabi is 58th among defensive tackles.

Hamilton Finds A Home At OSU

For DaVon Hamilton, the fourth time was the charm.

The Pickerington (Ohio) Central three-star defensive lineman went through a steady stream of promotions on the recruiting trail. At various points of his recruitment, he was committed to Ohio, Pittsburgh and Kentucky before landing at Ohio State with a verbal commitment Jan. 26.

Less than 10 days later, Hamilton faxed in his letter of intent to Ohio State, giving his nomadic search a happy ending.

"At this point, I am furthering my education at The Ohio State University," Hamilton said at a signing day ceremony held at his high school. "I would like to thank my family and all of the people out there that have supported me all this way."

Hamilton (6-3, 290), the No. 54 defensive tackle and No. 40 overall prospect in Ohio, cited the school's environment for why he chose Ohio State.

"It was really the atmosphere," said Hamilton, who donned a red OSU cap during the ceremony. "I feel like it's a wonderful place to be. I was just trying to

find the best place for me. Ohio State just happened to be that place in the end."

Glover-Williams Wins Fax Race

Eric Glover-Williams is known for his speed, and he showed it off in a new light by becoming the first Buckeye to send in his letter of intent Feb. 4.

His NLI showed up at the WHAC just after 7 a.m., two hours before his signing ceremony at Canton's Fawcett Stadium. Glover-Williams said he wanted to be the

Continued On Page 10

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# Alford Hiring Pleases 2016 OSU RB Commit

Continued From Page 9

first to send it in because he was the first verbal commitment of this class. Even though that was his goal, the success came as a bit of a surprise to his mother, Ann Williams, who expected Hilliard to get his in first.

The four-star prospect drew plenty of rave reviews from those who spoke at his ceremony and noted his growth over the past year. The list of speakers included Thom McDaniels, who coached Canton McKinley in 2014, and school principal Ruth Zitnik.

"Last spring, I think he really kind of hit that moment of recognizing what he had at his fingertips," Zitnik said. "He was always kind of told he was special, but at that point he recognized he had a special gift and he could really capitalize on it, especially in relation to getting a college education. I think the pressures were finally at a point where he could manage them."

## Gustin Opters For USC Over OSU

Meyer did suffer one February setback, as Salem (Utah) Hills four-star defensive lineman Porter Gustin (6-4½, 242) chose Scout.com national recruiting champion Southern California over Arizona State, Ohio State and Utah in a Feb. 3 announcement.

"The environment up there is just great," Gustin said following the announcement. "USC is a school I've followed my whole life, and from the first time I went up there for a visit, I've had a great relationship with the staff.

"I like the direction they're taking the team and I think they can definitely be in the national championship hunt here in the next couple of years. I feel like the program is on the rise."

Ohio State became a late player for his services after the CFP National Championship win piqued his interest in the Buckeyes. Meyer visited Gustin in Utah on Jan. 29, and Gustin flew out to Columbus one day later for an official visit on the last weekend before National Signing Day.

By all accounts, Gustin seemed to enjoy his visit and many believed the Buckeyes had narrowed or fully erased the lead held by the Trojans.

"It started after he lost a basketball game and he had to take a red-eye flight due to his game, and I'm sure that's not an ideal foot to start on," Scout.com recruiting

## A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

### 30 Years Ago – 1985

Recruiting analyst Tom Lemming gave the Buckeyes a "B" for their 1985 recruiting haul.

The class could have been better if not for the disappointment of losing Dayton Stebbins linebacker Brent White, considered to be the best player in the state of Ohio, to rival Michigan.

"I think that maybe he saw that he could play at Michigan right away as a freshman," Lemming said. "That's the only thing I can think of. I thought he would go to Ohio State right up until the end."

### 25 Years Ago – 1990

Euclid, Ohio, running back Robert Smith picked Ohio State over USC after weeks of protracted rumors that had him leaning first to one school and then to the other.

"All along, I had the feeling USC would have to do something special, have something better than usual, to get me to go out of state," the two-time Ohio Mr. Football said. "It's not that I feel loyalty to Ohio or anything. It's more a feeling of comfort. I know I'll be taken care of here."

### 20 Years Ago – 1995

The end of the recruiting season was unkind to Ohio State as three highly rated players chose to go elsewhere and two verbal commitments changed their minds.

As far as uncommitted players, Miami (Fla.) snapped up Bradenton (Fla.) Southeast tailback Dyral McMillan and Farmington Hills (Mich.) fullback Nick Williams while wide receiver Randy Moss of Belle (W.Va.) DuPont chose Notre Dame.

Meanwhile, Radnor, Pa., linebacker Greg See opted to drop Ohio State in favor of Florida and receiver Gerald Williams of Tucker,

analyst Doug Kimmel said. "However, it seemed like all the negatives that could have come from that were quickly alleviated by how well the visit went. I think it went about as well as it could have."

The late push wasn't enough, though, and the nation's No. 6 defensive end and No. 47 overall prospect will head to Los Angeles this summer.

### Walker Pleased With New Hire Alford

With Ohio State set to hire running backs coach Tony Alford from Notre Dame, the decision has been met with approval in some important circles.

Five-star class of 2016 running back Kareem Walker, who committed to Ohio State in January, said he is in favor of Meyer's hire in a statement released Feb. 8.

"When I selected Ohio State I was aware

that the coaches are the best in the profession and that they would be sought after by other schools and the NFL," it read. "I'm sorry to see Coach (Stan) Drayton move on, but he feels that's what's in his best interest and I wish him and his family well. Coach Meyer was very reassuring that he was going to bring in the best RB coach in the nation, and he's done that with Coach Alford.

### 15 Years Ago – 2000

Head coach John Cooper loved the athleticism of his 13th Ohio State recruiting class.

"When you look at these linebackers and defensive backs we've signed, all these kids can run," Cooper said of a group that included such prospects as Marco Cooper, Robert Reynolds and Jamal Muhammad along with defensive backs Brandon "Bam" Childress, Harlen Jacobs, Will Allen and B.J. Barre.

"If you can't run, you can't play," the OSU head coach added. "The best thing I like is the overall team speed of this incoming freshman class."

### 10 Years Ago – 2005

Head coach Jim Tressel was happy with his group of 18 players signed despite a maelstrom of bad press that had surrounded the program for much of the previous year.

"I think you always have certain battles to fight," Tressel said. "Sometimes you have too many guys at one position, sometimes it could be people saying things that they perceive. It's never easy. But I thought these (assistant coaches) battled through all of those things."

The class included three national top-100 prospects – No. 20 Alex Boone, an offensive lineman; No. 31 Jamario O'Neal, a defensive back; and No. 80 Doug Worthington, a defensive lineman.

National analysts rated the Buckeyes' class No. 3 in the Big Ten behind Michigan and Iowa.

### Five Years Ago – 2010

Tressel earned the ire of some Ohio State

fans when the Buckeyes missed on all three late-deciding prospects they were in on.

St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall five-star offensive tackle Seantriel Henderson, the nation's No. 1 recruit, chose USC. Highly touted offensive lineman Morgan Moses out of North Chesterfield (Va.) Meadowbrook chose Virginia, and Cincinnati St. Xavier offensive lineman Matt James selected Notre Dame.

Tressel seemed unfazed, responding at his National Signing Day press conference by reading off the winning percentages of previous recruiting classes, all of which hovered around 80 percent.

### One Year Ago – 2014

Ohio State signed the No. 5-ranked class in the country, a group highlighted by Cincinnati Moeller five-star linebacker Sam Hubbard and Hinesville (Ga.) Liberty County linebacker Raekwon McMillan.

"The linebacker position is one that's going through an overhaul right now," head coach Urban Meyer said. "Far too many mistakes have been made in either lack of development or whatever, and it's just not where we need it to be."

The top-five class came on the heels of the No. 1 class in 2013. Scout.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene noted that the upcoming College Football Playoff and its format would make it critical to stockpile recruits without having a down year on the recruiting trail.

"There are no more Cinderellas like in college basketball, where your point guard can get hot and carry you for three weeks," Greene said. "It makes it far more likely that whoever has the most toys is going to win."

this summer, as three signees will take part in the annual Ohio North-South Classic games April 25.

Played at Welcome Stadium in Dayton, this year's event features Lorain three-star tight end Rashod Berry, Glover-Williams and Huber Heights (Ohio) defensive tackle Robert Landers. Glover-Williams and Berry will suit up for the North team in the Divisions I-III contest, and Landers will line up against them on the South squad.

This year's game marks the 70th edition of the North-South Classic and the third year in a row that it's been split up into two separate contests by divisions. Unlike last year, Ohio State will have representatives only in the large-school game, which will kick off at 6 p.m.

The 2012 contests included Chris Worley, Gareon Conley and Darron Lee, and last year's games featured Parris Campbell and Brady Taylor.

For additional information on tickets and events surrounding the games, visit <http://ohionorthsouthclassic.com>.



Kareem Walker

### Three Signees To Play In North-South Game

Ohio State fans will have a chance to watch some future Buckeyes suit up one last time before they arrive in Columbus



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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: OSU'S 2015 CLASS

# Meyer, OSU Sign 27 New Buckeyes

From Eric Glover-Williams' commitment in August 2013 to Ohio State's 5-for-5 finish on National Signing Day, the football program accepted signed national letters of intent from 27 players in its class of 2015 on Feb. 4.

Twelve of the newest Buckeyes are from Ohio – including six of the top 10 players in the state – while 13 of them are expected to line up on the offensive side of the ball, leaving 13 defensive players and one specialist.

For the first time since 2001, Ohio State did not ink a prospect from Cleveland Glenville in the class, but the Buckeyes did bring in players from Utah, Arkansas and South Dakota – states that have never produced an OSU letter winner.

It is the eighth-ranked recruiting class in the nation and the best in the Big Ten per Scout.com for the fifth year in a row. For the first time in the Scout era, which began in 2002, the Buckeyes didn't sign a five-star recruit, but there are 15 four-star players and 11 more three-star talents. Four of the players are in the Scout 100, nearly tying the total of five signed by the rest of the conference (two for Penn State, one each for Michigan State, Wisconsin and Michigan).

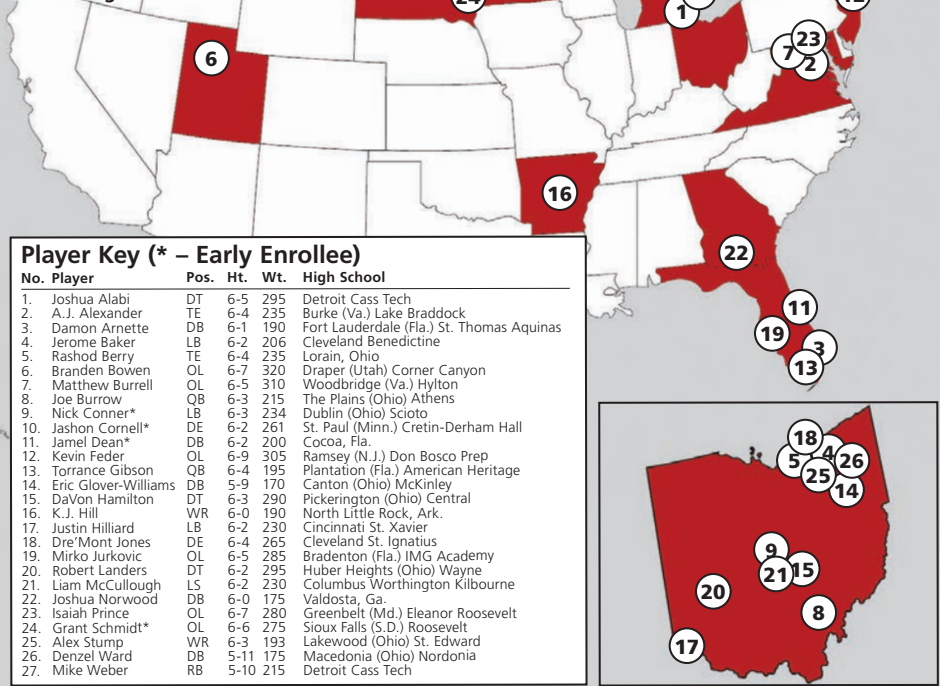
But beyond that, who are these newest Buckeyes? BSB attempts to answer that question with profile boxes of each of the signees in the class.

All rankings cited are provided by Scout, and all of the expert opinions featured herein are from Scout analysts except when noted.

These bio boxes were compiled by BSB staffers Jeff Svoboda, Ryan Ginn and Blake Williams and designed by Matthew Hager.

## Class of 2015

On Feb. 4, 27 players from 11 states signed letters of intent to play at Ohio State. Here is a map featuring where they played football during the 2014 season.



Player Key (* – Early Enrollee)					
No. Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	High School	
1. Joshua Alabi	DT	6-5	295	Detroit Cass Tech	
2. A.J. Alexander	TE	6-4	235	Burke (Va.) Lake Braddock	
3. Damon Arnette	DB	6-1	190	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas	
4. Jerome Baker	LB	6-2	206	Cleveland Benedictine	
5. Rashod Berry	TE	6-4	235	Lorain, Ohio	
6. Branden Bowen	OL	6-7	320	Draper (Utah) Corner Canyon	
7. Matthew Burrell	OL	6-5	310	Woodbridge (Va.) Hylton	
8. Joe Burrow	QB	6-3	215	The Plains (Ohio) Athens	
9. Nick Conner*	LB	6-3	234	Dublin (Ohio) Scioto	
10. Jashon Cornell*	DE	6-2	261	St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall	
11. Jamel Dean*	DB	6-2	200	Cocoa, Fla.	
12. Kevin Feder	OL	6-9	305	Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep	
13. Torrance Gibson	QB	6-4	195	Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage	
14. Eric Glover-Williams	DB	5-9	170	Canton (Ohio) McKinley	
15. DaVon Hamilton	DT	6-3	290	Pickerington (Ohio) Central	
16. K.J. Hill	WR	6-0	190	North Little Rock, Ark.	
17. Justin Hilliard	LB	6-2	230	Cincinnati St. Xavier	
18. Dre'Mont Jones	DE	6-4	265	Cleveland St. Ignatius	
19. Mirko Jurkovic	OL	6-5	285	Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy	
20. Robert Landers	DT	6-2	295	Huber Heights (Ohio) Wayne	
21. Liam McCullough	LS	6-2	230	Columbus Worthington Kilbourne	
22. Joshua Norwood	DB	6-0	175	Valdosta, Ga.	
23. Isaiah Prince	OL	6-7	280	Greenbelt (Md.) Eleanor Roosevelt	
24. Grant Schmidt*	OL	6-6	275	Sioux Falls (S.D.) Roosevelt	
25. Alex Stump	WR	6-3	193	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward	
26. Denzel Ward	DB	5-11	175	Macedonia (Ohio) Nordonia	
27. Mike Weber	RB	5-10	215	Detroit Cass Tech	



**JOSHUA ALABI**  
DT • 6-5 • 295  
Detroit Cass Tech  
Rank: Mich. 16, DT 58, Overall NR

★★★★★

**ACCOLADES:** Playing as a left tackle, he helped block for an offense that rushed for more than 3,000 yards in 2014. Alabi was a Michigan first-team all-state selection as a senior and was also honored as all-metro by the Detroit News and all-city by the Public School League.

**ALABI SAYS:** "It just felt like the right thing. It felt like a family. I prayed on it and feel like I made the right decision. (Head coach Urban) Meyer was excited, just happy for me to become a Buckeye."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "He started out in high school as a defensive lineman, and then as the team really needed him he transitioned into more of an offensive tackle. He played there exclusively his junior and senior year and was an all-state selection as a senior. The question mark on him is that he hasn't played on the defensive side of the ball too much in the last couple of years. He has the natural tools play there, but it may take a year or two under Larry Johnson to get him back into the swing of things on that side of the ball." – Allen Trieu

**PERSONAL:** Alabi is the son of Felicia Jones and Charles Alabi. He was a high school teammate of current OSU cornerback Damon Webb as well as fellow Ohio State signee Mike Weber. He committed to Ohio State at the program's Friday Night Lights camp held in Ohio Stadium.

**COMMIT DATE:** July 25, 2014



**A.J. ALEXANDER**  
TE • 6-4 • 235  
Burke (Va.) Lake Braddock  
Rank: Va. 20, WR 100, Overall NR

★★★★★

**ACCOLADES:** Alexander caught six passes and scored two touchdowns as a senior before tearing his ACL. He was an all-state honoree in Virginia as a junior, when he caught 41 passes for 650 yards and seven touchdowns and nabbed five interceptions as a defender.

**ALEXANDER SAYS:** "I fell in love with football going into 10th grade when I knew I had a chance to play on varsity. I figured I could hopefully get to the next level of this sport. I hope to be successful at the next level. I hope my knee heals well and that I can play next year and make an impact for the team."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Alexander is a big, strong, physical receiver. He runs good routes and does a nice job of using his body to get open. He has the ability to make the tough catch across the middle or downfield. When the ball is in the air, Alexander shows great concentration and ball skills. He does a nice job of catching the ball with his hands and is very tough to bring down after the catch. Alexander is also extremely dangerous in the red zone." – Michael Clark

**PERSONAL:** Alexander is the son of Katrina and Anthony Alexander. He comes from a military family and moved to Virginia in the eighth grade after living in Japan for the previous six years. He also has played basketball, where he was a second-team all-state selection as a junior.

**COMMIT DATE:** Sept. 12, 2014



**DAMON ARNETTE**  
DB • 6-1 • 190  
Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas  
Rank: Fla. NR, CB 118, Overall NR

★★★★★

**ACCOLADES:** Arnette had three interceptions, five additional pass breakups and three quarterback sacks as a senior and earned honorable-mention all-defensive team honors on Broward County's Class 8A-7A-6A list.

**ARNETTE SAYS:** "Speaking with the players, those players have the same mind-set as me and my teammates from St. Thomas. I felt like the environment is very similar to St. Thomas, and that's a good environment for me to be in, to push myself. They're getting an aggressive corner that's versatile. I'll play man, I can press, I can run, and I'll make plays."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Arnette is a nice flip, especially that late in the game for Urban Meyer and Ohio State. Depending on how he physically matures he could end up playing in a variety of different roles in Columbus. Initially I could see him playing cornerback but growing into a safety. This is a pretty physical kid that can play near or in the box and be productive against the run. He's good in coverage with a lot of room for growth and improvement, which is just a natural progression. His size is an advantage, he runs well and he plays with good instincts." - Jamie Newberg

**PERSONAL:** Arnette is one of seven Division I signees from his high school, which recently produced Ohio State star Joey Bosa and won the 2014 state championship in Florida.

**COMMIT DATE:** Feb. 2, 2015

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: OSU'S 2015 CLASS



**JEROME BAKER**

LB • 6-2 • 206  
Cleveland  
Benedictine

Rank: Ohio 4, OLB 10, Overall 139



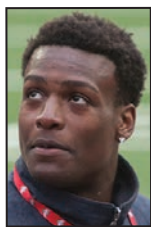
**ACCOLADES:** Baker helped Cleveland Benedictine to the 2014 Division IV state championship, a 21-14 win over Kettering Alter. Baker scored twice on offense in that game, including the winning score, and also had 11 tackles on defense to earn the game's MVP honors. He was an all-state selection by The Associated Press and was the co-defensive player of the year for Division IV. A U.S. Army All-American, Baker also played running back for Benedictine and finished with 3,065 career rushing yards.

**BAKER SAYS:** "Just being home, that was a big motivation for me. Coach Meyer is a great coach and I really got to know them. I learned some things talking with them and building that relationship so it was just the right move for me and just a good fit. I'm all Buckeye and that's all I can really say."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "A very good athlete who is great in chase mode. He runs down a lot of plays from the back side and to the sideline and uses that same agility and lateral ability to slide his way around blockers. He's very strong in coverage and shows top-notch ball skills for a 'backer. He must get stronger and improve at taking on blocks when he can't get around them. He is a solid wrap-up tackler but not an explosive striker as a hitter right now." – Allen Trieu

**PERSONAL:** The son of Theodora and Jerome Baker Sr., Baker was originally committed to Florida. Just three months later, Baker elected to commit to his home-state team.

**COMMIT DATE:** Oct. 21, 2014



**RASHOD BERRY**

TE • 6-4 • 235  
Lorain, Ohio

Rank: Ohio 31, TE 19, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** Berry is a two-time Associated Press all-state honoree, including first-team Division I honors in 2014 after helping Lorain to a 7-4 season and the first state playoff appearance in school history. He posted 37 receptions for 578 yards and 11 touchdowns as a senior, plus an added 11 tackles for loss including six sacks, as well as six forced fumbles and an interception.

**BERRY SAYS:** "I'm excited. I'm going to my dream school, Ohio State. Words can't explain how excited I am. It's been very exciting watching Ohio State win the national championship. I knew they worked hard and I was excited to see them have success on the field this year. It's been crazy being committed. Everyone is proud of me, and I'm making the city of Lorain proud and I'm going to my dream school."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Berry is one of the most impressive pure athletic specimens in the senior class in Ohio. Berry has tremendous raw skills and could project to a number of positions at Ohio State. The hope is that once he has one position to concentrate on, that Berry will be able to have his production match his potential." – Bill Greene

**PERSONAL:** The first Lorain public schools athlete to play for Ohio State since running back Raymont Harris, Berry is the son of Lashonda Berry. He also starts for the Lorain High basketball team, which was undefeated as of Feb. 6.

**COMMIT DATE:** Oct. 22, 2014



**BRANDEN BOWEN**

OL • 6-7 • 320  
Draper (Utah)  
Corner Canyon

Rank: Utah 7, OT 61, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** Rated the second-best offensive tackle in Utah, Bowen was named a first-team all-state selection in 2014. He helped Corner Canyon reach the state quarterfinals in 2013 and the state semifinals in 2014.

**BOWEN SAYS:** "I won't be outworked. I love the weight room and I have desire to be great. I am excited for Coach (Ed) Warinner. He gets the best out of his guys, and I know I can really develop under him. Obviously, Urban (Meyer) is the best in the business. I am just really fired up to get out there and start working."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "A lot of guys who are 315 pounds look fat, but he's just athletic. He looks like an ox. He's built like a Greek god. He works hard in the weight room. He's in there at 6 a.m. and works out after school. If you were to hang out at an NFL training camp in the summer and he was out on the field, there's nothing that would indicate that he's in high school. Physically, he looks like he belongs in the NFL right now. Obviously he doesn't play like that yet, but appearance-wise he really looks the part." – Doug Kimmel

**PERSONAL:** Bowen is the son of Natalie and Jordan Halling. He trains with John Madsen, who played for Meyer at Utah during the 2004 undefeated season. He was born in Tennessee and moved to Utah in 2005.

**COMMIT DATE:** Nov. 23, 2014



**MATTHEW BURRELL**

OL • 6-5 • 310  
Woodbridge (Va.)  
C.D. Hylton

Rank: Va. 7, OG 11, Overall 168



**ACCOLADES:** After playing two years at Chancellor High School, Burrell transferred to Hylton and helped his team to a combined 19-4 record in his final two seasons of high school. He was invited to attend The Opening camp in the summer of 2014 at the Nike headquarters.

**BURRELL SAYS:** "First, Coach (Urban) Meyer. Coach Meyer, Zach Smith, Larry Johnson, Ed Warinner, Coach (Tom) Herman, they're all wonderful coaches. Some schools have one coach you click with, but all these coaches I clicked with and they talked to my parents on a first-name basis. You can't go wrong with something like that. It was really the coaching staff."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Burrell really fires off the football and is relentless at the point of attack. He is very strong and plays with good leverage. Along with his strength, Burrell is extremely athletic and gets to the second level of the defense with ease. He plays very hard and does a nice job finishing his blocks. Overall, he is a special player, and his best football is ahead of him." – Michael Clark

**PERSONAL:** The son of Nicky and Matt Burrell Sr., Burrell was introduced to football by his father. At first Burrell was a basketball player, but his aggression was too much for the hardwood. When his playing career is over, Burrell is interested in pursuing a career in criminal justice or another area "where I can help somebody," he said.

**COMMIT DATE:** Nov. 17, 2014



**JOE BURROW**

QB • 6-3 • 215  
The Plains (Ohio)  
Athens

Rank: Ohio 8, QB 13, Overall 178



**ACCOLADES:** Burrow's senior year saw the quarterback get flooded with honors. He was named Ohio's Mr. Football, a first-team Associated Press all-state player and the Division III Co-Offensive Player of the Year. Those accolades came after he tossed for nearly 4,500 yards and 63 touchdowns with just two interceptions in leading Athens to the Division III state championship game. In his career Burrow amassed more than 11,400 yards and 157 touchdowns through the air while running for more than 2,000 yards and another 27 scores.

**BURROW SAYS:** "It was a big monkey off my back to finally commit, especially to a great school like Ohio State. The opportunity to win multiple championships is great. They said that they want a guy that can throw first and run second. That fits my game perfectly. I think I'm going to be very successful there."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Ohio's top QB prospect for the 2015 class must continue to add strength and bulk. However, he has a strong arm to go with a high football IQ. He is a natural leader with the ability to stretch a play and throw on the run who is also a tough runner that is not afraid of contact." – Dave Berk

**PERSONAL:** The son of Robin and Jimmy Burrow, his father is the defensive coordinator at Ohio University. His father and older brothers Jamie and Dan all played football at Nebraska. Burrow was an early commit to Ohio State as he was just the third player in the 2015 class to offer a verbal commitment.

**COMMIT DATE:** May 27, 2014



**NICK CONNOR**

LB • 6-3 • 234  
Dublin (Ohio)  
Scioto

Rank: Ohio 22, OLB 25, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** As a junior, Connor recorded 129 tackles with 19 tackles for loss and was named second-team Division II all-state by The Associated Press. He was forced to miss the second half of his senior season with a knee injury, though he was still invited to the Semper Fidelis All-American Bowl.

**CONNOR SAYS:** "I just walked in with Coach Meyer into his office (when I committed). We all sat down with my family. We got to know each other. He said I had a great family, and I know he does too. Coach Meyer said that he would like to see me improve my speed and my footwork. He thinks those aspects of my game can be worked on."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "He's an outstanding pure football player, a throwback who is tough, aggressive and best when coming forward. His straight line and closing speed is solid and he plays with an excellent motor. He has good ability to fight his way through the wash and shows good timing on the blitz. He is a sure tackler with good technique but must continue to improve his lateral agility and pass coverage skills. Defensive end is not entirely out of the question in college." – Allen Trieu

**PERSONAL:** The son of Renee and Scott Connor, the Ohio State commit comes from a family of Buckeye fans. Connor grew up in a house that had a room dedicated to Ohio State. Connor enrolled early at Ohio State and will be able to participate in spring football.

**COMMIT DATE:** June 17, 2014



RECRUITING WRAP-UP: OSU'S 2015 CLASS



**JASHON CORNELL**

DE • 6-2 • 261

St. Paul (Minn.)  
Cretin-Derham Hall

Rank: Minn. 1, DE 19, Overall 191



**ACCOLADES:** Cornell was named a second-team Minnesota all-state pick by The Associated Press during his junior and senior seasons. He earned the defensive line MVP honor at the Nike Football Training Camp in Columbus in the summer of 2014 and was invited to Nike's The Opening camp later that year. Cornell was selected as an Under Armour All-American.

**CORNELL SAYS:** "They have great football, great academics and great fans at Ohio State – great coaches, too, so you can't go wrong. You've got Urban Meyer and Larry Johnson, two of the top coaches in the country. You've got great academics as well as one of the biggest alumni bases in the country."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Cornell's projection has changed a little as his body has changed over the years. Initially, he was a 225-230-pound hybrid linebacker type of edge rusher. Now up around 270 pounds, he offers possibilities as a strongside end who can slide inside in certain situations. He gets off the ball well and has good finesse as a pass rusher. He has a good inside swim move and is able to get low and dip his shoulders to get around offensive tackles on the outside. He has good, quick feet and does a nice job with his hands as well." – Allen Trieu

**PERSONAL:** Cornell, the son of Sheena Cornell, committed to Ohio State in July and enrolled early in January. He hails from the same high school as Minnesota Twins player Joe Mauer, Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Michael Floyd, former Florida State quarterback Chris Weinke and NFL quarterback Steve Walsh.

**COMMIT DATE:** July 2, 2014



**JAMEL DEAN**

DB • 6-2 • 200

Cocoa, Fla.

Rank: Fla. 45, CB 58, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** Dean accounted for 975 yards on offense and made 22 catches for 15 touchdowns as a senior in 2014. Dean was named the 2014 Brevard County Player of the Year as well as the Florida Athletic Coaches Association's District 12 MVP. His impressive senior season came after an ACL tear ended his junior campaign.

**DEAN SAYS:** "I just felt that Ohio State was the right place to be for me. I had developed a sense of comfort with them because I had been there before and really fit in. It feels great to be a Buckeye. I was at the Penn State game (in 2013) and was able to see the atmosphere. The coaches told me it would be unlike anything I had ever seen, and they were exactly right."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "When they were doing position drills at Friday Night Lights in 2013, he showed quick feet and was one of the best defensive backs in position drills. He did everything real quick, real smooth and demonstrated what kind of athlete he was. He was very good. He was one of two guys that really took over during the position drills." – Derek Young

**PERSONAL:** Dean is the son of Yolanda Kimbrough and Derrick Jefferson. He was the second commit for the class of 2015 and is one of four early enrollees. He is the teammate of Bruce Judson, a 2017 four-star running back who is also committed to play for Ohio State.

**COMMIT DATE:** Dec. 1, 2013



**KEVIN FEDER**

OL • 6-9 • 305

Ramsey (N.J.)

Don Bosco Prep

Rank: N.J. 14, OT 72, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** Feder started for two years at Don Bosco Prep, a program that was at one point ranked the No. 1 high school team in the nation in 2014. Feder is the No. 2 offensive tackle prospect in the Garden State.

**FEDER SAYS:** "(Ohio State) was a humongous family atmosphere, from all the players to the coaches. I bonded extremely well with Coach (Ed) Warinner and Coach (Urban) Meyer out there. Once I got there everybody took me in and I was just like another brother to them. It's a great family atmosphere out there as well as an amazing program. That's what really won me over."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "More important than his size is his length. His arms are really long and his legs are really long and it allows him to cover a lot of space without really having to move much. The concern is how much a kid that size can move laterally. Obviously you're looking at tackles, so it's not like you're going to need him to pull or anything. The concern is whether he'll have the foot speed to take care of the edge rusher. He's got to develop that." – Brian Dohn

**PERSONAL:** Feder is the son of Brian Feder and is the fourth New Jersey prospect in the last three years to sign with Ohio State. He flipped his commitment from Miami (Fla.) to Ohio State after receiving a scholarship offer from the Buckeyes.

**COMMIT DATE:** June 22, 2014



**TORRANCE GIBSON**

QB • 6-4 • 195

Plantation (Fla.)

American Heritage

Rank: Fla. 10, QB 5, Overall 52



**ACCOLADES:** A two-time state champion quarterback, Gibson competed at the Elite 11 quarterback camp and was a U.S. Army All-American. A first-team all-state pick in 2014, Gibson's high school numbers include more than 4,000 passing yards, 44 touchdown passes, 2,275 rushing yards and 28 rushing TDs.

**GIBSON SAYS:** "When I went on my official visit and (Urban Meyer) saw me, he started yelling and started getting rowdy. A coach like that really wants you. He told me he wants me as a quarterback, and I believe him. I can't wait to go to Columbus. They can look forward to me playing quarterback, leading the team to a national championship and just winning."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "There is so much to like about Gibson. What really jumps out at you is that this kid has unreal athleticism. If Scout had an athlete category he would be a five-star recruit. Gibson has a very good combination of size and speed. As a quarterback he's an ultra-dangerous runner, whether it's by design within the zone read system or when things break down and Gibson must ad lib. He has superior scrambling skills. On the field he's rarely caught. Gibson is a long strider who can cover a lot of ground in a hurry. As a thrower he makes some of his best plays on the move." – Jamie Newberg

**PERSONAL:** Also a track star who can run the 200 meters in under 22 seconds, Gibson is the son of Joanne Seymour.

**COMMIT DATE:** Nov. 3, 2014



**ERIC GLOVER-WILLIAMS**

DB • 5-9 • 170

Canton (Ohio)

McKinley

Rank: Ohio 5, RB 19, Overall 140



**ACCOLADES:** An Under Armour All-American, Glover-Williams was an offensive star in high school, earning all-state honors. He ran for 1,149 yards and 14 touchdowns as a senior and also had a pick-six and punt return touchdown. Glover-Williams ran for 3,820 yards and 56 touchdowns in high school.

**GLOVER-WILLIAMS SAYS:** "I'm happy to play defense and it's going to be fun. I speak with (cornerbacks coach Kerry) Coombs a lot, and I'm pretty sure I'm going to be on the defensive side of the ball at Ohio State. I'm looking forward to being more polished at the position. My mind-set is to stick with what I know and take the coaching I receive."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Glover-Williams is an explosive athlete who can make people miss in the open field and has the speed to score from just about anywhere on the field. He's a tough, competitive kid who plays hard and runs hard and will break some tackles despite being a smaller kid. He has a good ability to track and catch the football. One question is what his main position will be in college, but versatility is an asset." – Allen Trieu

**PERSONAL:** Glover-Williams is the son of Ann and Jerry Williams and hails from the same high school as Mike Doss, Tyler Everett and Steve Miller, among others. He played both offense and defense his senior year of high school.

**COMMIT DATE:** Aug. 25, 2013



**DAVON HAMILTON**

DT • 6-3 • 290

Pickerington (Ohio)

Central

Rank: Ohio 40, DT 54, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** Hamilton compiled 67 tackles, including 23 tackles for loss, in 2014 during a senior season in which he was named an AP all-state selection. Hamilton was also chosen as the Ohio Capital Conference's Ohio Division Player of the Year and Division I Central District Player of the Year. He served as a three-year starter on both sides of the ball.

**HAMILTON SAYS:** "It was a long process. It's a long process for anybody, really, but I'm definitely glad it's over with. It was really the atmosphere. I feel like it's a wonderful place to be. I was just trying to find the best place for me. Ohio State just happened to be that place in the end."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "First off, he has a great first step off the football, and the quickness sets him apart from other linemen. He only played defense as a senior and his film is excellent, so he has a lot of untapped potential at the position. Hamilton plays hard and takes to coaching well. A redshirt year could be in order, but he should be a productive player over the course of his Ohio State career." – Bill Greene

**PERSONAL:** Hamilton is the son of Sabrina and Damien Hamilton. He is a product of the same high school as OSU center Jacoby Boren as well as men's basketball starter Jae'Sean Tate. Hamilton was previously committed to Ohio, Pittsburgh and Kentucky before signing with the Buckeyes.

**COMMIT DATE:** Jan. 26, 2015

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: OSU'S 2015 CLASS



**K.J. HILL**

WR • 6-0 • 190  
North Little Rock, Ark.  
Rank: Ark. 3, WR 32, Overall 229



**ACCOLADES:** Hill earned U.S. Army All-American Bowl honors and helped North Little Rock to the state semifinals while catching 58 passes for 1,023 yards and 11 touchdowns as a senior.

**HILL SAYS:** "One thing I do well is make big-time plays in big-time games and help lead my team. I first fell in love with football at the age of 6 when my mom made me go out and play pee-wee football. The college (I was) looking for will develop me as a player and a person and help me get to the next level. Outside of football, I would like to experience me growing up and becoming a man. I hope my future holds me playing in the NFL and training younger kids after football."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Hill looks like a running back or even a linebacker when you first lay eyes on him. He has thickness, he is very strong for a wide receiver and he uses those things to his advantage against corners. His hands stand out more than anything – very strong hands, very consistent hands, and he plucks the ball out of the air. He has good quickness but he can improve separation speed. He will catch the ball in traffic and shows great body control." – Chad Simmons

**PERSONAL:** Hill is also a standout basketball player who led his school to a state championship in 2014.

**COMMIT DATE:** Feb. 4, 2015



**JUSTIN HILLIARD**

LB • 6-2 • 230  
Cincinnati  
St. Xavier  
Rank: Ohio 1, MLB 2, Overall 63



**ACCOLADES:** The top-ranked player in Ohio, Hilliard was an Associated Press all-state selection and the Division I Defensive Player of the Year. He helped St. Xavier to a 10-3 record his senior year and a state semifinals appearance. He had 71 tackles and five sacks as a senior after amassing 76 tackles, four sacks and seven passes defended as a junior. Hilliard was also a U.S. Army All-American and competed at Nike's The Opening camp this summer.

**HILLIARD SAYS:** "I really didn't notice it until I went on some other college visits how genuine the people are and how passionate the fans are at Ohio State. When I went on my last two Ohio State visits, I had time to build relationships, especially with the 2014 class. Those were some of the greatest guys I met on recruiting trips, and they were just being genuine with me. I thought I fit in really well with the guys."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "He plays extremely fast on tape. He's one of those kids who is always moving full speed, always coming forward. When he gets to the quarterback or running back, he definitely lets them know he's there. He's a big hitter. He's violent on film. There were questions about how well he moved in space, but when they took the pads off for 7-on-7s at The Opening in Oregon this summer, he proved he could do it against elite guys." – Allen Trieu

**PERSONAL:** The son of Diane and Carl Hilliard, Justin has an older brother, C.J., who will be a third-year sophomore running back at Iowa during the 2015 season.

**COMMIT DATE:** July 2, 2014



**DRE'MONT JONES**

DE • 6-4 • 265  
Cleveland  
St. Ignatius  
Rank: Ohio 13, DE 21, Overall 220



**ACCOLADES:** Selected for the U.S. Army All-American Bowl, Jones was an AP all-state selection in 2014 after racking up 47 tackles, four sacks and four forced fumbles.

**JONES SAYS:** "Coach (Larry) Johnson and I have a pretty strong relationship. We talk about a lot from personal life to football life and academics. We're pretty comfortable. Each time I came I got more and more comfortable being around them and being at the facility. That's what made me commit. I'm excited to put on the uniform and play. I love the school. This is a childhood dream for me, so me coming here is a big thing."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Jones has taken the next step in his development, and I was very impressed by what I saw. He is still in the process of turning potential into production, and there is no doubting his physical skills. I still think he could possibly move inside and play tackle for Ohio State, similar to what Adolphus Washington is doing, but he could also excel at the strongside defensive end spot. He has size, strength, quickness and athletic ability." – Bill Greene

**PERSONAL:** Jones is the son of Schontina Jones and Sanderline Williams. He was a high school teammate of Ohio State linebacker Kyle Berger at St. Ignatius, where he played under legendary head coach Chuck Kyle. He has also played basketball at St. Ignatius.

**COMMIT DATE:** June 18, 2014



**MIRKO JURKOVIC**

OL • 6-5 • 285  
Bradenton (Fla.)  
IMG Academy  
Rank: Fla. 49, OG 38, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** Jurkovic helped lead IMG to a 10-1 record in 2014. He is rated by Scout.com as the No. 2 offensive guard in the state of Florida and is one of four starting offensive linemen at IMG to sign with a Division I program.

**JURKOVIC SAYS:** "I like to play fast and physical and fluid. One thing I do well on the football field is I always play through the whistle. One of my greatest strengths is my footwork. I'm looking forward to great chemistry with my teammates and great academics."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Jurkovic should be a versatile college offensive lineman who should be able to play right tackle and slide inside and be a guard. Jurkovic moves very well and has terrific feet. He can get off the ball well and instantly position himself to get the proper angle on a defender. He shows flexibility and the ability to bend. Jurkovic can overwhelm you with power and also move to seal the edge." – Chad Simmons

**PERSONAL:** Jurkovic is the son of Angie and the late Mirko Jurkovic. His father was a team captain and All-American at Notre Dame under Lou Holtz. Jurkovic transferred to IMG Academy for his senior season after three years at South Bend (Ind.) St. Joseph's. He lived next door to Ohio State strength and conditioning coach Mickey Marotti when Marotti held that same position at Notre Dame. His uncle John Jurkovic played in the NFL for nine years.

**COMMIT DATE:** Dec. 4, 2014



**ROBERT LANDERS**

DT • 6-2 • 295  
Huber Heights (Ohio)  
Wayne  
Rank: Ohio 21, DT 29, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** While playing under Jay Minton at Wayne, Landers accumulated 153 career tackles and 16½ tackles for loss. The defensive tackle was a second-team Associated Press all-state selection as a senior. The Warriors went 13-2 during Landers' senior season, advancing to the Division I state championship game. Landers was an All-Southwest District selection his senior season and was named the area defensive player of the year.

**LANDERS SAYS:** "At first I wasn't so much impressed by it all. I was like, 'This is like any other university.' But to get a chance to go up and see the tradition that comes along with the school and seeing how the coaching staff is and seeing how the team is, you see how much they are one big family. So I enjoyed every bit of it."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Strong and explosive, Landers has a super-quick first step and the strength to engage with power while still keeping great balance and the ability to disengage quickly to make a play. Despite his height, Landers can take on double teams and allow others to make big plays. The last half of senior season he played the best football of any DL in the country. He reminds me of former Cincinnati AP All-American Terrill Byrd." – Dave Berk

**PERSONAL:** The son of Tracy Matthews, Landers was originally committed to West Virginia before flipping to the Buckeyes. As a junior Landers was the state champion in the shot put, throwing a distance of more than 61 feet to win the title.

**COMMIT DATE:** Dec. 16, 2014



**LIAM MCCULLOUGH**

LS • 6-2 • 230  
Columbus  
Worthington Kilbourne  
Rank: Ohio NR, LS NR, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** A U.S. Army All-American, McCullough is rated the No. 2 long snapper in the nation by the Rubio long snapping service. He was a four-year starter in high school.

**MCCULLOUGH SAYS:** "There are definitely people that say that long snappers aren't important and aren't deserving of scholarships. But when the top schools in the nation are offering snappers out of high school, schools such as Ohio State, Michigan State, Wisconsin and Alabama, these big-time head coaches are saying that these players deserve scholarships as well and are an important part of the team. I think that speaks for itself coming from the best head coach in the country in Coach (Urban) Meyer."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "He's one of those kids that is always improving. I've never seen him stay stagnant, which is very good for any athlete let alone a long snapper. He's one of those kids who's always asking what he needs to improve for next time. It's not just lip service, either. He's not just saying that. He legitimately wants to know how he can get better. Liam does a very good job mentally of handling the pressure." – Rubio Long Snapping instructor Chris Rubio

**PERSONAL:** Just the second long snapper in Ohio State history to earn a scholarship coming out of high school, McCullough has taught himself to play the piano and trombone. His parents are Michelle and Mike McCullough.

**COMMIT DATE:** June 10, 2014

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: OSU'S 2015 CLASS



**JOSHUA NORWOOD**

DB • 6-0 • 175  
Valdosta, Ga.

Rank: Ga. 40, CB 86, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** Norwood recorded 44 tackles, including 11 for loss, six interceptions and five forced fumbles to earn first-team all-state honors as a senior. Norwood was named co-defensive player of the year for Region 1-6A.

**NORWOOD SAYS:** "I felt comfortable with the coaches and the players, and I loved the way the program is run. They have a lot to offer. In life you're going to meet new people and see new places, and it teaches you how to adapt."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Urban Meyer and his staff are getting a kid that is going to come in hungry. He has solid technique. He's shown he can play press coverage or off the ball. You're not going to find a much better coaching staff top to bottom than the one he plays for at Valdosta. Fundamentals are a strength for him, and he has great ball skills. He's not afraid to jump the route and make a play on the ball. He's a natural pass catcher playing defensive back." – Chad Simmons

**PERSONAL:** Norwood is the grandson of Geneva and Willie B. Knight. He is the first prospect from the famed Valdosta program (23 state titles and six national championships) to sign with Ohio State. He is the school record holder in the 110- and 300-meter hurdles.

**COMMIT DATE:** Nov. 4, 2014



**ISAIAH PRINCE**

OL • 6-7 • 280  
Greenbelt (Md.)  
Eleanor Roosevelt

Rank: Md. 2, OT 6, Overall 14



**ACCOLADES:** Prince was a consensus Maryland all-state pick in 2014 while also earning all-metro honors from The Washington Post, something he accomplished in his final three seasons of high school football. Selected as a U.S. Army All-American, the big-bodied lineman helped Eleanor Roosevelt to an 11-1 record in 2014. The team reached the post-season undefeated before falling in the state 4A regional final.

**PRINCE SAYS:** "Things I'm looking forward to the most when I get to college are people I can trust and other things aside from just the football aspect. How is everyday life on campus?"

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Prince is raw but wildly talented and could develop into a cornerstone left tackle in college. He has tremendous length, moves his feet well and is explosive. He drives his legs and uses his long arms to initiate contact and keep the defensive player off balance. Prince is a very good athlete, but he needs to work on staying lower and also pass protection, where he has to develop his kick step." – Brian Dohn

**PERSONAL:** One of the last members of the 2015 recruiting class to make his intentions known, Prince is the only member of the class from Maryland. The lineman is interested in pursuing a career in sports management once his playing days are over or another field that doesn't require a typical 9-to-5 schedule. Getting a degree is a priority, Prince said, and it will certainly be in something sports related.

**COMMIT DATE:** Feb. 4, 2015



**GRANT SCHMIDT**

OL • 6-6 • 275  
Sioux Falls (S.D.)  
Roosevelt

Rank: S.D. 1, OT 56, Overall NR



**ACCOLADES:** Schmidt was named to the Semper Fi All-American Bowl this season after helping Roosevelt to consecutive state championship games.

**SCHMIDT SAYS:** "I kind of grew up watching Ohio State, and when I was a freshman my coach told me, 'You're probably going to get recruited because you have a pretty big frame.' He asked me what would be my dream school and I told him Ohio State. I think it's really cool that they're still in the Midwest and they're a dominant school. That's not really how it is anymore, even if that's how it used to be. They're the most dominant school in the Midwest, and they have a really cool stadium and great tradition there."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "He's got a really good frame. He's in shape and has room to grow and is not at all fat by any stretch of the imagination. Physically, from a size, build and athletic standpoint, he has all the boxes checked off. If you were going to build the physical characteristics of a lineman, he has many if not all of the things you would look for. Grant tested really well at Ohio State's camp. He won the Smokehouse (speed test) for offensive linemen, and it really wasn't close if I remember correctly. His best asset is his athleticism." – Allen Trieu

**PERSONAL:** The first player to join the Buckeyes from South Dakota, Schmidt is enrolled already at Ohio State. He is the son of Sharon and Jay Schmidt.

**COMMIT DATE:** June 10, 2014



**ALEX STUMP**

WR • 6-3 • 193  
Lakewood (Ohio)  
St. Edward

Rank: Ohio 9, WR 24, Overall 184



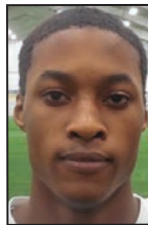
**ACCOLADES:** Stump suffered a broken foot that ended his season for the eventual state champions after making 11 catches for 109 yards in his final game vs. Cincinnati Elder. He caught 57 passes for 987 yards and 14 touchdowns as a junior.

**STUMP SAYS:** "People don't see me as a real speedster but that's something I take pride in with my game – being able to stretch the field and use my speed. That's one thing that I think people are just now starting to take notice of. Growing up in Ohio, it's always been my dream to play for Ohio State because this is the state I was born in. Once I got the offer, there was just something in my heart that told me I had to be a Buckeye."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "The player that has enough talent and maximizes his effort rarely fails at the next level if he stays healthy, and that will be Stump. He also plays against the top competition in the state on a weekly basis and is at his best when the game is the biggest. He still has a lot of ceiling left as a player, and as he gets practice and game reps and adds bulk he should get a lot better. Stump catches everything. Period. The hands are a given." – Bill Greene

**PERSONAL:** Stump had offers from Harvard and Yale, and he is the son of Laura and Mike Stump.

**COMMIT DATE:** Oct. 12, 2014



**DENZEL WARD**

DB • 5-11 • 175  
Macedonia (Ohio)  
Nordonia

Rank: Ohio 7, CB 21, Overall 171



**ACCOLADES:** Ward helped Nordonia to the state Division II title game as a senior when he posted 1,300 total yards and 20 touchdowns on offense as well as nine interceptions on defense. He was the co-defensive player of the year in D-II.

**WARD SAYS:** "I didn't have my best day (at Ohio State camp) and I knew I had a lot of stuff to work on, so I wasn't real sure where the coaches were at and their point of view. I thought I could have done way better. I just knew I wanted to go there. As soon as they gave me the offer, there was no other question about it."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "He's shorter, lighter and has a cat-like quickness, and that's what Chris Ash favors rather than the big 6-1, 200-pound physical corners. He fits in real well with what they're doing now. I don't know that he fits in real well under the old system, but he can cover. He can change direction instantly, while a bigger, heavier guy might take a while. He can do it instantly. He's like a cat with his change of direction. Every single defensive back gets beat at some point, and he has that ability to recover well. He can change direction instantly." – Bill Greene

**PERSONAL:** A state qualifier in track and field as part of Nordonia's 4x400-meter relay and as a long jumper, Ward is the son of Nicole and Paul Ward.

**COMMIT DATE:** June 19, 2014



**MIKE WEBER**

RB • 5-10 • 215  
Detroit Cass Tech

Rank: Mich. 1, RB 9, Overall 69



**ACCOLADES:** A first-team Associated Press all-state honoree and finalist for the state's player of the year award, Weber rushed for 2,268 yards and 29 touchdowns as a senior, averaging 10.1 yards per carry. He rushed for a state-record 404 yards and five touchdowns in a regional championship win and amassed 890 yards and 13 touchdowns in Cass Tech's four-game run to the state semifinals. Weber was a U.S. Army All-American and a co-recipient of the Detroit player of the year award.

**WEBER SAYS:** "Really just being (at Ohio State) over the past two years and them sticking with me even when I was committed to Michigan, they stuck with me and made sure that I was their guy. It's a real good feeling to know that from a good school, and I hope we win more championships."

**EXPERT'S TAKE:** "Weber is a compact back who runs with good patience. He is a slasher with a good burst and good acceleration. He catches the ball well out of the backfield and also does a nice job in pass protection. He has run largely out of the shotgun in high school. He's shown the ability to run between the tackles but is not a true power back." – Allen Trieu

**PERSONAL:** The son of Toni and Mike Weber Sr., Weber first started playing football when he was introduced to the game by his father when he was just 6 years old. When his football career is over Weber is interested in pursuing graphic design.

**COMMIT DATE:** Dec. 10, 2014

## RECRUITING WRAP-UP: MIKE WEBER

## Weber Upset Over Drayton's Departure To NFL

By RYAN GINN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The clock was nearing midnight when the text message hit Urban Meyer's phone.

The start of National Signing Day was just seven hours away. Sleep wasn't on the agenda. The Ohio State head coach was holed up in his daughter Gigi's empty bedroom, presumably to spare the rest of his family from the constant buzz from his phone that came with the last-ditch pursuit of a topflight class. The midnight hour isn't particularly well-known for good news, so Meyer had to know he was in for a long night when running backs coach Stan Drayton shot him a text.

Detroit Cass Tech four-star running back Mike Weber, a player who committed to the Buckeyes in early December, was having second thoughts. Spurred by the arrival at Michigan of Jim Harbaugh and the daily crush of pressure at his high school (a noted U-M stronghold), Weber was listing out the reasons he was considering lining up against instead of with Meyer and Drayton for The Game.

"That young man got talking about the opportunity to play at home, in front of a home crowd - real stuff," Drayton said. "Immediately I texted Urban in the middle of that conversation, 'We've got to keep recruiting this kid. It's not over. He's got some great questions and great concerns.' We knew at a quarter to 12 midnight that we were still in a battle."

A funny thing happens when a life-altering decision looms - understanding gives way to second-guessing, and nerves triumph over comfort. That was true with Weber, who needed to be reminded of why he committed to the Buckeyes in the first place.

It's something that assistant coaches have experienced time and time again. The recruiting world is not immune to cold feet.

"You can sit there and provide information, provide information, hit some good trigger points, and at 12 midnight right before signing day it can be as simple as, 'What is Curtis Samuel's role on this football team?'" Drayton said. "You spend two years recruiting an individual and giving them that information, but because the pressure is right around the corner some of those first day questions come back up."

"That's the nature of the process. My job in that deal is to provide him the information that is needed, make him aware of the opportunities he has at Ohio State and, most importantly, be as honest and real as I possibly can for him so he can make a legit decision for him and his family."

Drayton sold Weber by telling him that Ohio State could offer him what Michigan felt was exclusive to its program - a chance to represent his home city while still playing away from home. He pointed to a former Cass Tech player, freshman cornerback Damon Webb, as evidence that a Michigander could be happy in Ohio and still make his hometown proud.

"(Weber's concerns were) just being a Michigan kid who's going to graduate with an Ohio State degree and wants to live in the state again one day and wants to have success," Drayton said. "He wants to represent Detroit wearing scarlet and gray. There's no way in the world I'm not going to let you represent where you're from. Not only that, I want to help you be an impact in the society of which you come from."

"The beauty of Ohio State is that we cross all boundaries here. That's what he realized on the back end of this deal, that we do cross all boundaries and the power of the Ohio State brand will allow him to attain whatever goals he wants to attain anywhere in this country. He understood that, did a little research, found that to be true and now he's a Buckeye."

Weber signed his letter of intent and faxed it over to Ohio State. Although the nation's No. 69-rated player was the last official signee in the class of 2015, his arrival was one of the most celebrated among the Ohio State coaching staff and fan base alike.

"It was tough saying no," Weber said. "Coach Harbaugh and (running backs coach Tyrone) Wheatley, they're real cool guys. They made sure I felt at home and told me the things I wanted to hear, but Ohio State has been there for a while and I have the trust there at Ohio State. They stuck with me when I was committed to Michigan. They stuck with me and made sure I was their guy."

The feel-good story lasted all of 24 hours. On Feb. 5, one day after National Signing Day, it was announced that Drayton would leave Columbus to be the running backs coach for the NFL's Chicago Bears.

Weber turned to Twitter, posting, "I'm hurt as hell" on his account. Because that's the only statement he's released since learning of the news, it's been dissected with attention and gravity normally reserved for the political arena.

Cass Tech head coach Thomas Wilcher, who played with Harbaugh at Michigan, poured gasoline on the glowing embers during a Feb. 6 radio interview with a Detroit sports talk radio station, calling the situation "a black eye on the university" and accusing Ohio State of recruiting under false pretenses.

"I think Urban Meyer will have to step his game up," Wilcher said. "We're going to have to talk. He has come to my school and got the No. 1 athlete two years in a row. You cannot come over here, come up to the



JOSH WINSLOW

**TOUGH MOMENT** - Detroit Cass Tech running back Mike Weber posted on Twitter that he was "hurt as hell" when position coach Stan Drayton left the Buckeyes the day after Weber signed his letter of intent.

north, and walk out of here with your pockets full and not give us respect.

"That's not going to happen again, I call tell you that right now."

Meyer has reportedly spoken to Weber in an attempt to smooth over the situation, and Ohio State took another step toward patching up the situation when it hired Notre Dame running backs coach Tony Alford to replace Drayton, giving Weber the chance to get to know his future coach.

Weber can ask out of his letter of intent if he so desires, but Ohio State is not bound to release him. The NLI is a legally binding document that ties an athlete to a school. Players who are not let out can typically leave only under penalty, having to sit out one year unless they transfer to a junior college program or to a school at a level lower than FBS.

It's past midnight, but Ohio State is still recruiting Weber.

*Paul's*

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: SIGNING DAY DIARY

# BSB Staffers Span Buckeye State For Signing Day

After a year's hiatus because of bad weather, Buckeye Sports Bulletin's annual National Signing Day diary returns.

It still wasn't warm in the Buckeye State but roads weren't blanketed with snow and ice as they were in 2014, so BSB staffers Ryan Ginn, Blake Williams and Matthew Hager as well as contributor Susan Zeier fanned out across Ohio to personally witness several of Ohio State's newest players celebrate their big days.

## BSB'S SIGNING DAY DIARY

The signing day ceremony is a time-honored recruiting tradition, and whether it was in Lorain – where emotion was palpable as Rashod Berry signed to become the first local player to pledge to OSU in more than two decades – or at traditional powers such as Canton McKinley and Cincinnati St. Xavier where these events have become old hat, there were plenty of smiles to be had on a big day across the state.

These events signify not only the culmination of the student-athletes' high school accomplishments but also the beginning of their college careers, certifying that big step to the next level.

BSB was present at five such ceremonies Feb. 4, and here is a glimpse of what took place.

### Hall Of Fame Bound

I am not a morning person. I want to be, and I've tried to make it happen ... but I'm just not. I'm very jealous

of those who have the ability to roll out of bed at 6 a.m. or can survive on just a few hours of sleep, but I'm on the opposite end of the spectrum in both cases. Even when I'm awake, I feel like I'm not a fully functioning person for the first hour or so.

With that being said, there are exceptions. There are times when my excitement can carry me, and National Signing Day happens to be one of those days. The night before, I set my alarm clock for 5:30 a.m. and wasn't even bummed about it.

The reason was simple: I love competition. I will watch people compete in anything. It can be college football or cricket or the National Spelling Bee (no, really, I love it and watch every year). Watching schools fight over the best college football players in the country also falls under that umbrella.

I still remember the day I fell in love with National Signing Day. It was exactly six years prior to this year's – Feb. 4, 2009. I was a sophomore in college at LSU, living in the same on-campus apartment complex as the athletes thanks to a registration glitch, and that was one of about four days of spring semester that I woke up before noon. I remember watching on ESPN as Sam Montgomery chose between LSU, Tennessee and UNC and thinking in my gut that the Tigers had a shot. LSU got Montgomery and finished with the No. 3 class that year – two spots behind Ohio State's top class – and I was hooked.

More than half a decade later, even as fewer and fewer prospects decide on the final day, I still look forward to the moment the clock hits 7 a.m. and the fax machines roar to life – an opening bell for insane people instead of the stock exchange. This year, though, I spent the early hours in a car on the way to Canton, Ohio.



RYAN GINN

### BULLDOG TO BUCKEYE – Canton (Ohio) McKinley's Eric Glover-Williams held his signing day ceremony at Fawcett Stadium.

For reasons that will be detailed below, I specifically requested to go to Canton McKinley to see four-star prospect Eric Glover-Williams. I was lucky enough that a fellow writer had that same destination and was willing to give me a ride. In turn, I served as the navigator. This was a terrible idea.

After almost missing multiple exits and turns while I was playing Trivia Crack on my phone instead of watching the road (priorities, right?), we actually made it to Fawcett Stadium in one piece. However, I had trashed the email that had the instructions on where to go once we got there. We must have circled around five times looking for a place to park that didn't require some sort of sticker or tag. Finally, I had us stop so I could dig up the email – the first good decision I made since hopping in the car.

My love of Twitter can't be overstated, so the first thing I wanted to do was hop out and tweet a picture of snowy Fawcett Stadium. An ice-covered parking lot made that a difficult proposition, but I survived with just one fall and headed to the press box for the ceremony.

The reasons I wanted to be in Canton were twofold. First, I think Glover-Williams has an interesting story. He's grown up since a fight with a high school teammate last spring almost cost him a spot in the class for which he was the first commit, and National Signing Day was a big moment for him.

He's also one of the most competitive athletes I've ever seen. He caught my eye at Ohio State's Friday Night Lights camp this

July, where he was thrown into the fire as a cornerback and fiercely defended 2016 four-star wide receiver Austin Mack, wrestling him to the ground at one point.

"I'm an athlete so I just like being competitive," Glover-Williams said, decked out in an Ohio State hat and tie with a gray suit. "Whatever I do I want to be the best at doing it, and I'm going to work as hard as I can to be the best at that position."

"I'm from Canton, Ohio. Competition and being competitive is just what we do out here. I just want to show everyone what we do around here is be competitive and compete against the best players in the country."

What struck me about his press conference was the amount of people who were there to support him. The press box was lined with family members and friends who hung on his every word as he spoke about his journey to OSU. Afterward, his principal told me how much Glover-Williams had grown in the past year, and his mother, Ann, told me how happy she was that he'd be getting a free education and spoke of how much he had grown up over the past year.

"It's hard when you're young and you've got so many people who are putting themselves on you," she said. "You get people that you don't know wanting to be your friend – it's been a tough ride, but he's growing and learning."

Afterward, we hit the road back to Columbus. My growling stomach forced a stop for breakfast, and I committed to Bob Evans over Cracker Barrel – a betrayal of my Southern roots.

I arrived back home and banged out a story on his ceremony before heading over to the Woody Hayes Athletic Center for Urban Meyer's press conference. I spoke with Stan Drayton for more than 20 minutes in what I now know was his last appearance as Ohio State's running backs coach. More writing followed, and I finally trudged to bed about 21 hours after I'd woken up that morning.

All things considered, I can't wait to do it again next year.

– Ryan Ginn

### Rough Start, Good Finish

My signing day started with a text message at 6:57 a.m.: "My laptop won't turn on."

That was sent from BSB editor Jeff Svoboda as I groggily looked for my glasses on my nightstand. For six of my first seven years with Buckeye Sports Bulletin, my

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**RECRUITING WRAP-UP: SIGNING DAY DIARY**

National Signing Day assignment had been the same.

I would essentially work on BuckeyeSports.com, our Scout website, throughout the day as everyone else attended signing ceremonies. I'd post when the national letters of intent would be received by Ohio State and make sure everything was running smoothly from BSB World Headquarters before going to Ohio State for the head coach's press conference.

This signing day was different. Svoboda would run the site, and I would fill in as needed behind the scenes before going to Pickerington Central just east of Columbus at 2:30 p.m. for defensive lineman DaVon Hamilton's signing ceremony. But I was going to get up early anyway, so Jeff's message didn't fluster me. I was ready to help out however he needed, so I got up and went to work – updating the site until Jeff was able to get his computer started from his place in Grandview.

Despite the unusual start, things went smoothly. I handled things on the message board and updated some stories on the site. Jeff managed BSB's Signing Day Dashboard on the site, which was our go-to page that posted all of our coverage on one page. As Ohio State swept the morning's commitments, Jeff and I (mainly Jeff) made sure everything was fine on the site. It was all over by 11 a.m. when Mike Weber's NLI was finally received by Mark Pantoni and the Buckeyes.

By then, however, I was at BSB HQ. I made the drive down from my place in Dublin and started doing my research on Hamilton. Admittedly, I really only pay attention to recruiting one day of the year – National Signing Day. I've never understood the interest in it on pretty much any other day and never will. I do, however, understand that is a minority opinion.

I learned that Hamilton had committed to four schools in less than a year, which might not sound great, but I can sympathize. Think back to when you were 18. Were you 100 percent sure of everything all of the time? I couldn't even pick what toppings I wanted on a pizza back then. So I left for Pickerington expecting to meet a kid – anyone younger than I am is a kid – who was probably more than happy to finally have his recruitment done and was eager to get on with the next step of his football life.

I arrived at Pickerington Central about 30 minutes before the start of the program and found my way to the school's gymnasium. It looked like pretty much every other high school's gym, with plenty of banners honoring great Tigers teams of the past. Only one side of the purple bleachers was open, so I took a seat in the front row next to a TV tripod from a Columbus station. Soon after, two other TV stations had arrived – and put their stuff directly in front of my view (thanks, guys!).

In all, six Tigers would be honored during the ceremony. An assistant coach opened things with a statement praising the senior class before each of the six



MATTHEW HAGER

**MEETING THE MEDIA – Pickerington (Ohio) Central defensive lineman DaVon Hamilton (right) speaks to the TV reporters who covered his National Signing Day ceremony.**

announced where they would be going to school, although all six wore paraphernalia of their choices.

Hamilton went first, joined by several family members. His statement was the briefest, too, thanking family and supporters after saying he would be a Buckeye. After everyone had their turn, the school kicked everyone out of the gym so the school's traditionally powerful women's basketball team could practice. So we went into a cafeteria area nearby, and I finally got some one-on-one time with Hamilton.

He was exactly what I expected – a nice kid who seemed a little overwhelmed by the moment. He said he picked Ohio State for the atmosphere and was ready to try to contribute on the defensive line next year.

"It was a long process," Hamilton, listed at 6-3 and 290 pounds by Ohio State, said with a smile. "It's a long process for anybody, really, but I'm definitely glad it's over with."

He cited the school's environment for why he chose Ohio State.

"It was really the atmosphere," said Hamilton, who donned a red OSU cap during the ceremony, of why he chose the Buckeyes. "I feel like it's a wonderful place to be. I was just trying to find the best place for me. Ohio State just happened to be that place in the end."

After finishing my one-on-one, I listened to the TV guys ask their questions in case they got better quotes or asked better questions. After that, I looked for Pickerington Central football coach Jay Sharrett but struck out. He had apparently left while I was talking to Hamilton. I then spoke to Hamilton's father, Damien, who was unsurprisingly proud of his son.

"It was a lot of hard work, a lot of effort, a lot of dedication on his part as well as parents," he said. "He earned it. He earned it as far as what he did his junior and senior year. It takes the words out of my mouth because you envision that you want your kid to go to the next level and get a chance to play at a high level somewhere. And going to Ohio State at the end? That's a mind blower."

I then left the school and went to the nearest McDonald's to post a story on Hamilton and his ceremony for BuckeyeSports.com. Why? Free Wi-Fi, of course. I bought something small to eat so I wasn't just mooching, and the best part was that they didn't ask me to pay with love.

– Matthew Hager

**An Early Start**

It can't possibly be time to get up already. That was my first conscious thought on National Signing Day. My alarm was ringing, the screen on my phone illuminating the fact that it was indeed 5:35 a.m., time for me to get up and begin my day.

I reluctantly threw the covers off myself and fighting every urge in my body showered and prepared for my first day covering National Signing Day for Buckeye Sports Bulletin. I was slotted to attend the signing ceremony for Ohio's top prospect, linebacker Justin Hilliard, and had at least an hour and a half of driving ahead of me. I poured myself two Thermoses of coffee (I had diligently set the pot to begin brewing at 5:25 a.m.) and closed my back door behind me before the clock hit 6.

With the sun making no threats to peek above the horizon I began my trek south toward St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati to witness the state's most sought-after player make things official and sign on to play for Ohio State.

The sun began to rise as I polished off the second Thermos of black coffee and crossed into Warren County, the full moon slowly fading from view on the right. Cars had joined the cavalcade of semi-trucks on Interstate 71 South at this point, and it wasn't long before four lanes of highway were filled with brake lights and my speedometer dipped below 20 mph.

I had prepared for this, leaving in plenty of time to account for any commuter traffic I might run into, but that didn't stop me from getting anxious and irritated at the slow-moving horde of cars in front of me. My fuel gauge dipping further and further into the red didn't help.

Stopping for gas meant I might be pushing my luck time-wise, but sitting in traffic was draining fuel. I began doing all sorts of obscure calculations in my head, with my faulty odometer providing little help. As I began calculating how strapped for cash I would be if I missed Justin Hilliard's signing and BSB thought it was a fireable offense, traffic began to clear.

A gas station appeared after I exited the highway, and I had time to fuel up. I pulled into the St. Xavier parking lot with the clock on my car stereo reading 7:47, meaning it was 7:43 a.m. All my worrying, as usual, was nothing more than a product of my mild obsessive tendencies.

I strolled into the high school, signed in and climbed the stairs for the library and Hilliard's signing ceremony. The linebacker was one of 12 students signing letters of intent to compete in college athletics, including eight football players, two soccer players and a pair of lacrosse players. Two additional St. Xavier senior football players signed letters Feb. 4 but were unable to attend the ceremony.

In the middle of it all was Hilliard, projecting a calm confidence in a white shirt and red tie, a scarlet Ohio State hat next to him on the table. Each player stood, stated his name, sport and where he would be attending college, putting on the hat representing his school of choice. Hilliard clapped for all of his classmates, smiling wide as he hid.

When given the orders the players began to sign ... blank pieces of paper.

"Sign your name over and over," one school administrator instructed. "Doodle if you want."

The athletes had already signed and faxed their actual letters (a photo of Hilliard's showed up on Twitter before I even entered the school) so the blank pages stood in for the photo shoot, a completely fabricated and orchestrated event, the perfect symbol of National Signing Day.

While the event was orchestrated, it was all for a good reason as friends and family of all the athletes huddled around taking pictures and beaming with pride. Hilliard's parents were no different as his father took multiple shots with his cell phone, some of his son signing his "letter" and others of him smiling in his Ohio State cap.

After the signing and photo opportunities for players with their families in front of a St. Xavier banner, Hilliard was in high demand. Multiple local TV stations wanted an interview with the future Buckeye as did a certain member of BSB. The linebacker was patient and cooperative, willing to talk with all who were interested about his journey from the school's developmental team as a freshman to Ohio's top player as a senior.

"It's definitely exciting," Hilliard said of making official the verbal pledge he offered in July. "It's been a long time coming from looking back to where I was an Ohio State fan. I never would have thought this was

Continued On Page 24

RECRUITING WRAP-UP: SIGNING DAY DIARY

# Berry's Signing Day Ceremony Was Big Party

Continued From Page 23

possible. Freshman year when I was on second string, trying to build my way up to this point, it's really exciting looking back at how much work it was and how far I came."

Growing up with scarlet and gray bedroom walls, Hilliard always wanted to be a Buckeye. He wore No. 47 for St. Xavier in honor of former OSU linebacker A.J. Hawk. Still, Hilliard did his due diligence in the recruiting process, but ultimately the close-knit environment he saw among the players at Ohio State made the difference, he said.

St. Xavier coach Steve Specht is no stranger to signing day ceremonies, and the proud coach said Ohio State just made the most sense for his star player.

"It's hard for an Ohio kid to say no to Ohio State, and ultimately from the get-go I think that was Justin's team," Specht said. "He felt like he fit and when you feel like you fit and you grew up wanting to be a Buckeye it's a pretty easy decision when push comes to shove."

It was an easy decision for Hilliard, which is why he made it so many months before he was able to make things official. When he did, the excitement and pride was clearly visible on his face, but even more so on that of his parents and coach.

That's my biggest takeaway from my first signing day at Buckeye Sports Bulletin. The day is the start of a new journey for the players but the culmination of all the mentoring and encouragement that parents and coaches have offered along the way.

With a full tank of gas I began my own journey home, pulling out of St. Xavier High School around the time that I would normally be waking up.

- Blake Williams



**DREAM COMES TRUE** - Cincinnati St. Xavier linebacker Justin Hilliard (center) grew up an Ohio State fan and will join the Buckeyes this fall.

### Double Dipping

Walking into the gymnasium at Lorain High School, I immediately realized this was not going to be your run-of-the-mill signing day ceremony. In fact it turned out to be rather elaborate and a lot of fun.

The bleachers were full of students, many wearing Ohio State jerseys or shirts. The Lorain High School band was there. Cheerleaders were hanging signs on the wall wishing Rashod Berry the best of luck at Ohio State. An oversized poster perched on an easel next to the guest of honor's table depicted Berry as a Lorain Titan and also Photoshopped into uniform as an Ohio State Buckeye. Excitement filled the air as I overheard a lady say to Rashod, "It's almost showtime!"

And showtime it was.

there is just wonderful. I feel like it's the best fit for me."

The highlight video was pretty much jaw-dropping, to see all the things he's done on both a football field and basketball court. Berry said he had fun watching and it even brought tears to his eye. He said he knows where he made his mark and that was right here in Lorain.

"I just want to make Lorain proud," he said.

With that, I hit the road east on Interstate 90 to Cleveland St. Ignatius High School to see defensive end Dre'Mont Jones. Having attended a signing ceremony at St. Ignatius in the past I pretty much knew what to expect. There would be a number of student-athletes celebrated, and not just football players.

I was right as the table of honor sitting up on the stage in the Breen Center auditorium had 12 placards with the names of student-athletes. Jones was obviously pretty easy to spot long before he was introduced as he mingled with family and friends before the proceedings began.

St. Ignatius athletics director Rory Fitzpatrick, the master of ceremonies, introduced his student athletes one-by-one to get the show started. Shortly thereafter, the young men put pen to paper as a multitude of cameras and cell phones went off capturing the special moment.

Fitzpatrick then urged Jones to put on the Ohio State hat sitting on the table in front of him. This caused quite a chuckle among the spectators because the hat didn't fit, leaving Jones struggling to put it on his head while uttering, "Oh, it's too small." To that, someone in the crowd yelled out, "It's not too small. Your head is too big!"

Once the athletes were made available for questions from reporters, of course, all media personnel present swarmed to Jones. While Jones was being hooked up to microphones for the various Cleveland TV news outlets, one reporter suggested Jones "better get used to this."

Upon being asked about he chose Ohio State, he said, "I was comfortable with the environment and the coaches. They are very special there." Asked if he expects to play right away in his freshman year, Jones hesitated then replied, "I don't want to say that. I don't want to jinx myself. It all depends on how I do when I get there."

Jones went on to express how excited he is to become part of the reigning national champions, explaining that watching the title game was incredible for him seeing how Ezekiel Elliott ran and how well the

BLAKE WILLIAMS

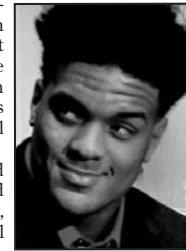
Lorain High teacher Steve Cawthon introduced Berry with the same enthusiasm he uses when announcing the starting lineup at school basketball games.

"Without further ado I present to you THE Ohio State Buckeye, No. 6, Rashod Berry!"

With the fight song blasting out from the band, the pompom-waving cheerleaders formed a tunnel which Berry trotted through before doing a little dance as he took his seat. Flanked by his mother, grandmother and football coach, he smiled and laughed as everyone watched a 15-minute highlight reel that was projected onto one of the gymnasium walls. The loudest and most rowdy crowd reactions, believe it or not, had nothing to do with football but rather when Berry's most memorable basketball plays appeared on the screen.

Berry's mother followed and tearfully expressed how proud she is of her very talented son, a son who is now a role model for other children in this northern Ohio county that has battled economic downturns. Berry addressed the crowd, too, emphasizing to his Lorain High classmates the importance of keeping grades up and working hard to attain goals. He also explained the importance to him of representing Lorain well and said he hopefully makes everyone in his hometown proud.

Berry was asked if he had checked his Twitter account yet, and he said he hadn't but figured it was probably pretty crazy. His excitement could not be contained. When asked what it was about Ohio State that won him over Berry explained, "It's a family down there. And the coaching staff. I love them. The players there are all friends. Everything



Dre'Mont Jones

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**RECRUITING WRAP-UP: SIGNING DAY DIARY**



SUSAN ZEIER

**'SHOWTIME' – Lorain, Ohio, product Rashod Berry was all smiles on National Signing Day.**

defense played. Furthermore, Jones said he knows that when and how he will contribute, whether it be special teams or on defense, will be determined by how hard he works and the effort he puts in once he gets there.

Then something not typical of the star athlete happened. It was a moment of the reality his future holds for him as he was asked simply what today felt like. Stumbling over his words he replied, "I don't know

what to say. I'm pretty much speechless right now."

Jones said he's lost 15 pounds to get down to 260, and his goal as a freshman right now is "first and foremost to play." When asked about head coach Urban Meyer, he said, "He's a very special coach. I mean he treats us like family and he loves us. He shows a lot of interest in the players and cares. I'm happy to play for him and be a part of the team."

– Susan Zeier

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE POSITIONS

# Newest Buckeyes Will Give Ohio State More Depth

By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Ohio State bolstered the depth at some position groups it had to attack when it signed 27 football recruits to national letters of intent Feb. 6.

In the following piece, Buckeye Sports Bulletin takes a look at how the recruits will boost each position group going forward. The number next to each position group indicates how many players at that spot are now on scholarship barring future injuries and attrition.

## Quarterback (6)

- Incoming recruits: Joey Burrow, Torrance Gibson
- Ohio State will have an embarrassment

of riches at the position now, but incoming quarterbacks coach Tim Beck said that the addition of the two four-star prospects is not a bad thing even given the returns of Braxton Miller, J.T. Barrett, Cardale Jones and Stephen Collier.

“You never know,” he said. “One play away, you never know. Cardale Jones is going to win a national title for you, right? You just never know. That’s what you tell them. And they’re going to develop under (head coach Urban) Meyer’s system here, and what he’s done wherever he went, quarterbacks have been extremely successful, and I think they saw that.”

## Running Back (5)

- Incoming recruit: Mike Weber

• Ohio State returns Ezekiel Elliott, who ran for the second-most yards in a single season at the school, as well as Curtis Samuel, the No. 2 back in 2014 as a true freshman. Juniors Warren Ball and Bri’onte Dunn are also in the picture, but Weber should give OSU young depth going forward.

“The last two tailbacks are as good as anybody in America,” Meyer said of the recruiting pitch at the spot given the recent success of Elliott and Carlos Hyde. “Statistically we have a fantastic offensive line and we believe in our tailback. It’s not theory. It’s real. You watch it on film.”

## Wide Receiver (11)

- Incoming recruits: K.J. Hill, Alex Stump
- Ohio State lost two starters in Evan Spencer and Devin Smith but has watched such younger players as Johnnie Dixon, James Clark and Parris Campbell get hurt over the past few years. Adding two receivers will help in both adding depth and competition as the Buckeyes try to find a pair of new starters.

“It’s important to replace guys that you’re losing,” wideouts coach Zach Smith said. “I feel great about where we’re at. This year we were just trying to get the two best wideouts we could get, it didn’t matter the position.”

## Tight End (4)

- Incoming recruits: A.J. Alexander, Rashod Berry
- The Buckeyes added a pair of big bodies with high amounts of athleticism in Berry and Alexander. Though both are three-star prospects, they project well and might be needed in the two-deep in 2015 as the Buckeyes return only Nick Vannett and Marcus Baugh among scholarship players.

## Offensive Line (17)

- Incoming recruits: Matthew Burrell, Isaiah Prince, Brandon Bowen, Kevin Feder, Mirko Jurkovic, Grant Schmidt
- Meyer admitted the Buckeyes were short on numbers after his staff’s first two recruiting cycles at OSU, but that has been rectified as the Buckeyes have added 11 scholarship players at the spot the past two years. This year, the focus was on offensive tackle, where OSU inked the 6-7 Bowen, 6-9 Feder, 6-7 Prince and 6-6 Schmidt.

“We kind of needed this haul,” Meyer said. “The offensive line, we don’t have the tall, long guys. There were three or four tackles that we needed. We’re short at that position.”

## Defensive Line (17)

- Incoming recruits: Jashon Cornell, Dre’Mont Jones, Robert Landers, Joshua Alabi, DaVon Hamilton
- This is a position that has been hit particularly hard by attrition the past few years, and with Michael Bennett, Steve Miller and Rashad Frazier out of eligibility, the Buckeyes wanted to make sure they had enough players to cover both the inside and outside spots. OSU will now have nine ends – including eight underclassmen – on the roster and eight tackles, three of whom will be seniors and three freshmen.

“The defensive line is always going to be a priority here at Ohio State and really any successful program,” said co-defensive coordinator Chris Ash. “If you’re going to be any good, you have to have a plethora of offensive and defensive linemen. We’re losing some guys and we’re losing some guys after next year, and we needed to make sure we replaced them in this year’s class.”

## Linebacker (10)

- Incoming recruits: Jerome Baker, Nick Conner, Justin Hilliard
- Bolstering the quality depth at linebacker has also been a focus under Meyer after he felt the unit wasn’t at an Ohio State level his first two years, and he was practically giddy at signing a trio of highly rated four-star prospects including Hilliard, the state of Ohio’s No. 1-rated player.

“Our linebackers I’m really excited about,” he said. “Luke Fickell has really done a very, very good job the last three years of building back up to the Ohio State standards. That, I think, was a void when we got here because of physical injuries and a variety of things. You look at these three guys, Nick, Justin and Jerome, they’re the exact kind of body types, mentality, people that you want.”



Luke Fickell

## Secondary (15)

- Incoming recruits: Jamel Dean, Eric Glover-Williams, Denzel Ward, Damon Arnette, Joshua Norwood
- With recent potentially career-ending injuries to Ron Tanner and Armani Reeves, there was a focus on making sure this position group was well stocked, especially given the prevalence of five- and six-DB looks in today’s modern game as well as the fact that defensive backs play such a key role in kick coverage.

That was one reason OSU sought the commitment of Arnette so late in the recruiting game after three-star safety Carlton Davis decommitted.

“Getting not only quality but quantity was important for us not only on the defensive line but in the secondary because we are in the same situation in the secondary, especially after we lost Ron Tanner and Armani Reeves,” Ash said. “That really hurt us.”

“There are things that come up during the recruiting game whether it’s a guy that decommits – that did happen to us where we were in on a guy for a long time and thought he was really solid and he decommits at the last second – or a player like we had who has DQed because of medical issues. Those things happen. But again, if you are really good at what you’re doing, you always have a contingency plan and you always have someone to go.”



Urban Meyer

## Special Teams (4)

- Incoming recruit: Liam McCullough
- Bringing in McCullough gives Ohio State two long snappers on scholarship as he joins senior Bryce Haynes, while OSU appears set in the kicking game with the presence of junior Cameron Johnston and sophomore Sean Nuernberger.

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RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE BIG TEN

# Trio Of Conference Schools Sign Top-25 Classes

By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Editor

Was it a good or bad recruiting year for the Big Ten?

That might depend on perspective.

When it comes to average star rating per recruit signed, four schools – Ohio State, Penn State, Michigan and Wisconsin – all finished among the top 16 teams in the nation. Add in solid classes for Wisconsin, Nebraska and Illinois, and the Big Ten had some impressive showings.

On the other hand, the SEC dominated the Scout.com rankings again. The Southeast produces the most talent of any region in research done by Scout, and four of the top five classes in the nation – those secured by second-ranked Alabama, No. 3 Auburn, No. 4 Tennessee and No. 5 Georgia – were inked by SEC schools. In all, 11 SEC schools finished in Scout's top 25, while Pac-12 school USC won the Scout recruiting title.

Add in the fact that the Big Ten signed just nine members of the Scout 100 – including zero five-star prospects – and it could have been a better year, though the league schools did sign most of the best players from the Midwest.

What follows is a school-by-school thumbnail look at each Big Ten school's signing class, outside of Ohio State, listed by final Scout ranking.

## 13. Penn State (25 signees)

James Franklin's first full class in Happy Valley made some noise as Penn State got off to a quick start with 15 commits by May. Some of those players left but many stayed, and Penn State ended up signing a class that included 13 four-star prospects as well as two members of the Scout 100.

Those two are defensive end Kamonte Carter (6-4, 257) of Gaithersburg (Md.) High School, Scout's No. 58 prospect and its top player in Maryland, and 95th-rated John Reid, a 5-10, 181-pound cornerback from Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep.

Penn State mostly stayed in its home recruiting areas – 11 prospects are from Pennsylvania, five from New Jersey and two from Maryland – and the Nittany Lions

signed eight of the top 10 prospects from the Keystone State.

"That's something that we take great pride in," Franklin said. "We take great pride in the state of Pennsylvania, we take great pride in this region. We think we can be very, very successful with players from Pennsylvania and from this region."

The Nittany Lions signed a pair of Pennsylvania running backs who were highly rated in Saquon Barkley (5-11, 210) of Whitehall and Andre Robinson (5-9, 215) of Harrisburg Bishop McDevitt, the Nos. 2 and 3 players in the state, respectively. Another highlight was four-star offensive lineman Sterling Jenkins (6-8, 294) of Pittsburgh Baldwin, who picked PSU over Ohio State in May.

## No. 18 Mich. State (22 signees)

Mark Dantonio signed a class that should keep the Spartans – who have finished in the top 10 of the final college football polls in consecutive years – in the running for Big Ten titles.

"When we came here back in 2007, the reality of the situation was that we were selling hope," Dantonio said. "Our facilities needed to be adjusted. We had not been to a bowl game in a couple years. It's to a point now where we are selling results, and that's a big difference."

The highlight of the class is L.J. Scott (6-1, 215), the No. 65 player in the nation and Scout's eighth-rated running back. The Hubbard, Ohio, native was pursued by some of the best in the nation including Ohio State but instead will play his college football in East Lansing.

Dantonio continued to hit the Buckeye State hard, signing five prospects, including making a late coup by getting pledges from Lakewood St. Edward twins Andrew (6-1, 210) and David Dowell (6-1, 180). The two four-star prospects played linebacker and defensive back/wideout, respectively, for the state champion Eagles and were late flips from Kentucky. Andrew is Ohio's No. 10-rated player while David checked in 14th.

MSU also earned a pledge from four-star DE Cassius Peat, the nation's No. 166 player,

on signing day. The 6-3, 235-pounder is from Tempe (Ariz.) Coronado del Sol.

## No. 31 Wisconsin (21 signees)

New head coach Paul Chryst signed a vintage Wisconsin class. How so? The Badgers signed one of the best running backs in the country, Scout 100 member Jordan Stevenson, as well as two offensive linemen (David Moorman and Jon Dietzen) in the Scout 300.

Stevenson (5-9, 190) hopes to follow in Melvin Gordon's footsteps and hails from Dallas South Oak Cliff, while Dietzen (6-5, 330) is Wisconsin's top player and is from Seymour High School while the 6-5, 275-pound Moorman is from Northville, Mich.

Chryst also finished strong on signing day as he pulled in a commitment from four-star linebacker Arrington Farrar, a 6-2, 202-pound prospect from College Park (Ga.) Woodward.

"You kind of knew going in it was going to be (a sprint to the finish) with the way the recruiting calendar fell this year," the former Pittsburgh coach said. "You were going to have a little less than 2½ weeks so you anticipated what it would be. This part is always a little bit busy, but it was fun."

Wisconsin also signed a pair of three-star quarterback prospects in Alex Hornibrook (6-4, 215) of Malvern, Pa., and Austin Kafentzis (6-1, 200) of Sandy (Utah) Jordan, who each enrolled early.

## No. 33 Nebraska (20 signees)

Mike Riley's first class in Lincoln was defense-heavy with 12 prospects lining up on that side of the ball, and the Huskers signed six four-star prospects.

The top player in the class might be cornerback Eric Lee Jr. (6-0, 180) of Highlands Ranch (Colo.) Valor Christian, Scout's No. 148-rated player. The Huskers also looked to defense in reeling in No. 201 Carlos Davis (6-2, 265) of Blue Springs, Mo., the nation's No. 19 defensive tackle.

Nebraska signed players from 13 different states, with no more than two signees coming from any one state.

"I think we should be that team (that recruits across the country)," Riley said. "I like that idea. We're right in the middle of

## Scout.com Big Ten Rankings

Rk.	Team	Signees
8.	Ohio State	27
13.	Penn State	25
18.	Michigan State	22
31.	Wisconsin	21
33.	Nebraska	20
35.	Illinois	25
36.	Michigan	14
47.	Maryland	18
48.	Northwestern	20
50.	Iowa	21
51.	Rutgers	25
56.	Minnesota	24
57.	Indiana	22
62.	Purdue	25

the country. We can grab from any direction, and it's not that far, so we have an idea about the foundation point and spreading out from there to the right spots where we can use coaches' connections."

Half of the class – 10 signees – committed to Nebraska after the flip of the calendar year.

## No. 35 Illinois (25 signees)

Head coach Tim Beckman made headlines on signing day for calling out the local media for not being positive enough about his program, but he also turned heads for pulling in his best class in Champaign.

There are a number of potential quick-fix players as seven signees are JUCO prospects, while Beckman also signed quarterback Jeff George Jr., the son of the former Illini QB who hails from Indianapolis Warren Central.

Three Scout 300 four-star prospects signed, led by offensive tackle Gabe Megginson. The nation's No. 122 prospect and No. 12 OT, Megginson (6-5, 300) is from Jacksonville, Ill., while 5-10, 200-pound running back Ke'Shawn Vaughn of Nashville (Tenn.) Pearl-Cohn is the state's Gatorade Player of the Year and was rated 259th overall in the nation by Scout. Fellow RB Dre Brown (5-11, 200) of DeKalb, Ill., is rated 299th by Scout.

"We are extremely excited about this class," Beckman said. "It's the best class we have signed here because of its depth and

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## RECRUITING WRAP-UP: THE BIG TEN

how it meets the needs of our team. Offensive line and running back were our two biggest needs, and we brought in nine high-quality young men at those positions."

**No. 36 Michigan (14 signees)**

Jim Harbaugh had to cobble together a class after his Dec. 30 hiring, and it wasn't able to shoot too far up the rankings because of the low number of signees. But Michigan signed seven four-star prospects and seven three-stars, including the No. 2 player in Michigan, Scout 100 wideout Brian Cole.

The Saginaw Heritage wideout is rated ninth in the nation at his position, and the 6-2, 190-pounder stayed committed throughout the end of the Brady Hoke era and the start of the Harbaugh regime.

The former Michigan QB got commitments from eight prospects after his hiring and four on signing day, including a pledge from four-star tight end Tyrone Wheatley Jr. (6-6, 260) of Buffalo (N.Y.) Canisius, the son of the former Michigan running back who was hired as an assistant coach under Harbaugh.

Only two prospects hail from Ohio – four-star safety Tyree Kinnel (5-11, 200) of Huber Heights Wayne, the state's No. 6 prospect, and three-star kicker Andrew David (5-9, 170) of Massillon Washington.

U-M inked two four-star prospects at quarterback in Alex Malzone, the nation's No. 14 signal caller, from Bloomfield Hills (Mich.) Brother Rice, as well as 19th-ranked Zach Gentry of Albuquerque (N.M.) Eldorado.

"Somebody just asked me the question, did I just go right into (recruiting) and pick up right where I left off at Stanford?" Harbaugh said. "No. I did not. I picked up two days after an NFL season and had to familiarize (myself) with who the players are, high school coaches again. It took some time."

**No. 47 Maryland (18 signees)**

Maryland also signed a smallish class but got some highly sought-after prospects, none more so than defensive tackle Adam McLean.

Scout's No. 146 overall prospect and No. 16 DT, McLean was the No. 3 prospect in Maryland and chose to stay home. The Gaithersburg Quince Orchard star checks in at 6-3, 280 pounds.

He was one of nine prospects to sign who hail from the D.C., Maryland and Virginia area that the Terrapins call home, a list that also includes the two other Scout 300 prospects to sign – 6-5, 320-pound offensive tackle E.J. Donahue (No. 194) of Frederick (Md.) Linganore and 6-2, 280-pound offensive guard Quarvez Boulware (No. 289) of Washington (D.C.) Friendship.

"We wanted to continue to build our team from the inside out and having been able to land the quality and the number of offensive linemen that we were able to land really enhances where we want to go in the Big Ten," head coach Randy Edsall said. "And then also to get the defensive linemen that we got headed by Adam McLean from Quince

Orchard – I think it helps us moving forward with what we want to do."

**No. 48 Northwestern (20 signees)**

Pat Fitzgerald did what has become Northwestern's usual recruiting job, signing one four-star prospect and 14 three-stars that he believes fit the Wildcats' program.

"Each young man has demonstrated the ability to excel in three key areas of his life – in the classroom, character in their communities and on the football field – and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so here at Northwestern," he said.

The four-star prospect is defensive tackle Jordan Thompson, whom Scout rated the No. 21 player at his position and No. 210 player in the nation. The 6-3, 255-pounder hails from Cincinnati La Salle, Ohio's Division II state champion, and is Ohio's No. 12 player.

Fitzgerald went hard after the skill positions, as five signees are defensive backs and four are wide receivers. Five players are from the Chicagoland area, while 6-2, 220-pound linebacker Tommy Vitale of Wheaton, Ill., is the brother of NU superback Dan Vitale.

**No. 50 Iowa (21 signees)**

Kirk Ferentz's Iowa program has produced a number of standout offensive linemen in his tenure, and that could continue as Iowa signed three four-star prospects and all are offensive linemen.

Two are 6-5, 290-pound twin brothers in Levi and Landan Paulsen of Merville, Iowa, while the highest rated player in the class is Warren (Ohio) Harding center James Daniels. The son of former OSU offensive lineman LeShun Daniels, the 6-4, 290-pounder – who is the No. 3 center in the class – will play with brother LeShun Jr. with the Hawkeyes.

"In our feeling we had to fortify that group a little bit, and we like the five guys that we've got," Ferentz said.

Nine of Iowa's signees are from the Hawkeye State.

**No. 51 Rutgers (25 signees)**

Scarlet Knights head coach Kyle Flood mostly stayed close to home for this class, signing seven players from New Jersey, six from Pennsylvania and three from New York.

Still, Rutgers didn't have the biggest presence in its home state, as the top player from the Garden State to sign was rated 16th, Tenafly tight end Nakia Griffin (6-5, 220). Rutgers also signed defensive back Ronnie James, the brother of current back Paul James, a 6-0, 175-pounder from Glassboro who had an offer from OSU.

The lone four-star prospect in the class is Marques Ford, a 6-4, 230-pound defensive end who hails from Gibsonton (Fla.) East Bay who was an Under Armour All-American.

**No. 56 Minnesota (24 signees)**

Head coach Jerry Kill's staff is known for its ability to develop players, and that will

have to be the case after Minnesota failed to ink a four-star prospect in the class.

The Golden Gophers also had to look outside of the Land of 10,000 Lakes as just two Minnesotans signed. They were the Nos. 3 and 4 players in the state and both offensive linemen in Bronson Dovich (6-5, 295) of Chaska and Nick Connelly (6-7, 277) of Red Wing, respectively.

The class includes five players from Illinois and three each from Michigan and Texas. Rockford (Ill.) Boylan Central Catholic quarterback Demry Croft (6-5, 198), who starred in the Offense-Defense Bowl, is Scout's third-ranked quarterback in the Midwest.

**No. 57 Indiana (22 signees)**

The Hoosiers signed 16 three-star prospects in a class that also includes four of the top 13 players in the state of Indiana. Those are wideout Isaac James (5-11, 180) of Carmel (seventh), offensive lineman Brandon Knight (6-5, 265) of Noblesville (eighth), defensive end Jacob Robinson (6-4, 235) of Westfield (11th) and defensive end Joe Beldon (6-2, 250) of Avon (13th).

Kevin Wilson inked five prospects from Florida and three from Ohio – Shadyside tight end Austin Dorris (6-5, 255), Powell Olentangy Liberty offensive lineman Hunter Littlejohn (6-3, 285) and Hamilton Ross offensive lineman Simon Stepaniak (6-4, 285). All are three-star prospects.

Indiana also signed three-star, 6-2, 190-pound defensive back Tyler Green of Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic, a one-time Ohio State pledge.

**No. 62 Purdue (25 signees)**

The highlight in Darrell Hazell's class at Purdue is 5-11, 205-pound running back Markell Jones, a three-star prospect from Columbus (Ind.) East who was named the state's Mr. Football and Gatorade Player of the Year. Scout ranks him the No. 10 player in the state.

Purdue also signed Kentucky's Mr. Football and Gatorade award winner, quarterback Elijah Sindelar. The 6-4, 200-pounder from Princeton (Ky.) Caldwell County is Scout's No. 35 signal caller in the nation.

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