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"For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More"

June 2019



COURTESY OF DARRION HENRY

KEEPING THEM HOME – Cincinnati Princeton four-star defensive end Darrion Henry (left), five-star offensive tackle commit Paris Johnson Jr. (center) and four-star linebacker Jaheim Thomas (right) are among Ohio State head coach Ryan Day's top targets for the 2020 recruiting cycle.

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Ohio State's New Coaching Staff Delivers On Promise To Prioritize In-State Recruits

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

When athletic director Gene Smith first introduced Ryan Day as Ohio State's 25th head football coach Dec. 4 at the Fawcett Center, the two-year offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach replaced seven-year head coach Urban Meyer with a rather direct message to the Ohio prep scene.

"To the high school coaches in Ohio: We have the best coaches and some of the best high school programs in all of America here in Ohio," Day said. "And it will continue to be our first priority to recruit Ohio football players. Every young football player in the state of Ohio should dream about one day becoming a Buckeye. And it's our staff's responsibility to make sure we recruit them at the highest level."

Six months later, Day and the Buckeyes have kept their word as they have navigated recruiting the classes of 2020 and '21.

BSB went to press with OSU's 2020 class at nine commitments with three from the Buckeye State – all along the offensive line.

Cincinnati St. Xavier five-star tackle Paris Johnson (6-7½, 295) has headlined the list as an in-state commitment since June 28, 2018, but two more local tackles joined him after Day took over. Cincinnati Elder three-star Jakob James (6-5, 275) and Norwalk, Ohio, three-star Trey Leroux (6-8, 355) committed, both almost immediately after Day and fourth-year offensive line coach Greg Studrawa

extended the offers.

James and Leroux have been on Ohio State's radar since the summer of 2018. Each camped last June and visited for multiple game days in the fall, and they were kept abreast of the Buckeyes' 2020 recruiting efforts as the 2019 class filled itself out first.

Meyer had recruited both project tackles, but Day made the executive decision in the spring to offer both – and avoid potentially missing out on them down the road.

"When I was here for the (early) signing day (Dec. 19), I think the question was asked about Ohio offensive linemen," Day said. "I said that was going to be an emphasis and it is. We're all over that. I mean that's from when we wake up in the morning until we go to bed at night. That's not going to change. There are great players in the state of Ohio. We're out there being aggressive and going after them."

James accepted an on-the-spot offer during a visit Jan. 21. Leroux nearly did the same after his came on a March 8 visit, stepping back briefly before jumping on it three days later. As he works toward his senior year, Leroux has a long road ahead in development, but transparency by Day and Studrawa has accelerated the progress.

"They've always been honest with my recruiting process, which wasn't always the case (with other schools)," Leroux told BSB. "But they were being honest

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COVER STORY

Buckeyes Balancing In-State, National Prospects



TREY LEROUX/TWITTER

HOMEGROWN TALENT – Three-star offensive tackle commit Trey Leroux, second from left, with his parents, Tami (far left) and Tony (far right), take a photo with Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith during the Buckeyes’ annual spring game on April 13.

Continued From Page 1

and always told me where I was at, what I needed to do to get the offer, so I always knew what I was going for.”

James and Leroux are just the tip of the iceberg, especially on the offensive line. OSU was one of the first offers out to Richfield (Ohio) Revere 2021 offensive tackle Ben Christman (6-6, 299), who appeared on its radar in the fall before an offer Feb. 5. With over 20 scholarship offers already with Alabama (April 30) and Georgia (April 24)

as two SEC blue bloods among the national list, Christman’s early bond with Day and Studrawa – highlighted by a recent visit March 29 – puts Ohio State in a strong position for the next cycle.

“It’s always a priority, so we want to make sure that in the next class that’s a huge emphasis as well,” Day said.

The offensive trenches in particular were an area that the Buckeyes needed to examine more carefully after hiccups from recent years, culminated by the staff missing on targets and scrambling for late additions in 2019.

Part of the reason Day brought Studrawa back, the head coach said, was the offensive line coach’s Ohio ties as a Fostoria native. Studrawa echoed Day’s sentiments about getting ahead – and staying ahead – in the Buckeye State with a sharper emphasis on recruiting locally.

“I think we’re going to look at it more carefully,” Studrawa said. “By that I mean sometimes guys are late developers. I think at times we all make the mistake of crossing a guy off the list a little bit too soon. We always look at Ohio first. We’re making a commit-

ment to get to know those guys early, see their skill set early and say, ‘OK, he’s going to be even better next year. Let’s get after him.’

“Before it was like, ‘Whoa, whoa, be careful with Ohio guys because as soon as you offer he’s going to say yes. Make sure you’re right.’ Right now, we’re trying to make sure that it’s an absolute emphasis to evaluate those guys, get to know those guys, get them in here, get a great evaluation of their skill set and then if we think it’s going to be good, let’s go get him.”

Ohio high school coaches have long

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COVER STORY

believed OSU needed to go with that approach regardless of who is at the helm.

Meyer's national-first mind-set brought blue-chip talents from all across the map to Columbus, but with a wait-and-see perspective held by many of Ohio State's top national targets going forward, Day and the Buckeyes' coaching staff have no choice but to recruit Ohio more aggressively.

Cleveland Heights head coach Mac Stephens has sent players such as junior wide receiver Jaylen Harris (6-5, 215) and sophomore defensive end Tyreke Smith (6-4, 267) to OSU in recent years and potentially has another on the way with Day's staff evaluating 2020 three-star defensive tackle Justin Wodtly (6-3, 271), who boasts nearly 20 offers, including from Big Ten programs such as Michigan State.

"So often, when you hear head coaches take over programs in the state of Ohio, a lot of times, they say they're going to recruit the state of Florida or certain areas," Stephens told BSB. "But I've got to be honest, I've

watched a lot of high school football all over the country, and I think the state of Ohio is as good or better than you're going to find in most states when it comes to high school football.

"There's just a wealth of talent throughout the state, but especially when you look at northeast Ohio and then the Cincinnati part of Ohio, with some of the schools from both regions that produce some great talent. I think you would be missing the boat if you didn't go after some of that talent, not to mention, just talent all over the state."

The Ohio-first philosophy starts at the top with Day, but the staff that surrounds him entering his first year is also important. The cabinet includes wide receivers coach Brian Hartline, who attended Canton (Ohio) GlenOak before starring at Ohio State as a wideout from 2005-08.

Hartline's efforts have had national impacts, with the most recent example coming May 31 when Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia five-star Julian Fleming (6-2, 199) committed

as the No. 1 wide receiver in the 2020 class, but local stars such as 2021 Massillon (Ohio) Washington four-star Jayden Ballard (6-1½, 164) are coming up the ranks.

"I can tell you this - he's well-liked by his position group," Stephens said of Hartline. "I know Jaylen speaks very highly of him. Jaylen looks forward to learning from him every day. He brings a different dynamic to that receiver room that I think has paid off this year. It will continue to pay off in the future. I know they're recruiting some dynamic receivers

and already have some dynamic young guys on the roster. So I think, ultimately, it's going to pay huge dividends."

With camp season set to start in June, the next wave of local talent is on deck for Day and the Buckeyes' upcoming evaluations. If the past six months have served as any indication, OSU will be watching in-state prospects closer now more than ever.

"We're recruiting the kids from Ohio harder than anybody in the country," Day said. "It's going to continue to be a priority."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL

Why Did New York Giants Pass On Haskins?

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Since he announced his declaration for the 2019 NFL draft Jan. 7, Dwayne Haskins appeared destined to join the New York Giants. On paper, it almost made too much sense for the Giants to take the former Ohio State quarterback.

Haskins grew up in Highland Park, N.J., just over 30 miles from New York's stadium in East Rutherford, and rooted for the Giants from Pop Warner through high school while developing the pure pocket-passing presence necessary for an NFL offense.

But instead of going with Haskins with the No. 6 overall pick in the first round April 25, quarterback-needy New York selected Duke's Daniel Jones, a stunner until Giants general manager Dave Gettleman revealed after the draft that he and his front-office staffers targeted the former Blue Devil early in the process, according to ESPN's Jordan Raanan.

"Jones and Missouri's Drew Lock were the headliners in Mobile, Alabama," said Raanan, who referenced the Jan. 26 Senior Bowl. "Lock was right behind Jones on the Giants' board. The Senior Bowl would be Gettleman's first exposure to them in a game environment. He had seen Ohio State's Dwayne Haskins play in the Big Ten Championship (Game) and Oklahoma's Kyler Murray and West Virginia's Will Grier when they met in a

(Nov. 23) Thanksgiving weekend match-up."

Three offensive series into the Senior Bowl, Gettleman was sold on Jones (6-5, 221), who completed 237 of 392 passes (60.5 percent) for 2,674 yards and 22 touchdowns to nine interceptions in 11 games while Duke went 8-5 (3-5 ACC) in 2018.

"Seeing Jones in person was an important box for Gettleman to check," Raanan said. "Watching a quarterback live, he can see and hear them throw to determine arm strength, the way they interact with coaches and teammates, how they react between series and their body language – things you can't get from watching tape."

New York crunched tape and did its homework on Haskins (6-3, 231), who blew Jones out of the water statistically last year with 373 of 533 passes completed (70.0 percent) for 4,831 yards and 50 touchdowns to eight interceptions as OSU went 13-1 (8-1 Big Ten) while winning Big Ten and Rose Bowl titles. The Athletic's Ross Tucker, however, pointed to inexperience as a concern for the Giants and others around the league.

"Two of Haskins' offensive linemen (Michael Jordan and Isaiah Prince) and a backup running back (Mike Weber) were all drafted, plus two Ohio State receivers (Parris Campbell and Terry

McLaurin) were selected on day two of the draft in the second and third rounds," Tucker said. "Four of (Kyler) Murray's offensive linemen, the best unit in the country, were drafted in the first four rounds. Plus, while at Oklahoma, Murray got to throw the ball to the first wide receiver to come off the board, Marquise 'Hollywood' Brown. The other receiver for the Sooners, CeeDee Lamb, is projected to be one of the top picks in next year's draft."

"All of which is just to suggest that it's fair to wonder how Jones would have fared if he were the quarterback at Ohio State or Oklahoma instead of Duke. I know that's the question I'd be asking."

After the Giants passed on Haskins, he fell nine spots before his name was called at No. 15 overall in the first round with the Washington Redskins, putting both in the NFC East, potentially for years to come, and putting the pressure on Gettleman to be right about Jones when Haskins was an option, The Athletic's Dan Duggan said.

"The Giants didn't want to risk waiting to take Jones with their other first-round pick (No. 17 overall)," Duggan said. "That showed the type of conviction that is necessary when drafting a franchise quarterback. But the question that will linger is if the Giants got the right one, because there were other options."

"Haskins went 15th to the Redskins and Lock remained on the board at the end of the first round. There was also the option of trading for 2018 first-round pick Josh Rosen, who became expendable after the Cardinals took Kyler Murray with the first pick. Gettleman said that he reached out to the Cardinals and told them 'if things happen, we might have an interest.' Obviously, the Rosen interest was extinguished when the Giants took Jones."

While Haskins has already started his career in Washington, which is down the road from where he went to high school at Potomac (Md.) Bullis, the fall from six to 15 in the draft cost him some money.

"The Giants had a chance to bring Haskins home to New Jersey with the No. 6 pick but opted for Jones instead," said NJ Advance Media's Ryan Dunleavy. "Haskins slipped to No. 15, where the Redskins eagerly were waiting. It cost Haskins about \$11.1 million, which is the difference in signing bonus expected for Jones and Haskins under the rookie wage scale slotted by draft position."

New York thinks it got its guy in Jones. Did the Redskins do the same with Haskins? The 2019 season and beyond will reveal the true answer.

"In a way, both the Giants and Redskins represented homecomings for the Ohio State product, but Haskins grew up a Giants fan going to camps," Dunleavy said. "No more. He laughed when he heard they didn't pick him."



Dwayne Haskins



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McCord Felt At Home During Unofficial Visits

By ANDREW LIND
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State's 2021 recruiting class received a significant boost April 30 when Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep four-star quarterback Kyle McCord committed to the Buckeyes. His decision followed a pair of unofficial visits this spring, which included a trip to Columbus for the annual spring game just April 13.

"The biggest thing for me was just my relationship with the coaching staff," McCord told BSB. "I have a great relationship with (head coach Ryan) Day and (quarterbacks coach Mike) Yurcich. Seeing what the staff did with Dwayne (Haskins) last season was really impressive. Every time I'm on campus, it just feels like home. And on top of that, they recruited me the hardest out of every school."

The 6-3, 204-pound McCord – who is considered the eighth-best pro-style quarterback and No. 115 prospect overall in the class of 2021 – picked Ohio State over nearly two dozen offers from programs such as Maryland, Michigan, Michigan State, North Carolina, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Rutgers, Syracuse, Texas A&M, Virginia Tech and West Virginia, among others.

"I think constant communication was huge in the process," McCord said. "I talk on the phone with them three or four times a week. Both of the quarterback backgrounds are very elite, too. Obviously, Coach Day has been in the NFL before, and Coach Yurcich put (former Oklahoma State and current Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback) Mason Rudolph in the NFL as well. Those two elements were really important for me."

McCord took his first unofficial visit in early February, shortly after he received an offer from the Buckeyes, and he immediately fell in love with



KYLE MCCORD/TWITTER

NEXT IN LINE – Ohio State quarterback commit Kyle McCord (left) met with former Buckeye signal caller Dwayne Haskins during his unofficial visit for the annual spring game on April 13.

the program. He spent a considerable amount of time that afternoon with Day and Yurcich, toured the Woody Hayes Athletic Center and met with several current players.

"Just being in the facilities, I could

sense the winning attitude all of the coaches and players have," McCord said.

As mentioned, McCord returned to campus for the spring game on April 13. And while he was drawing plays on the

whiteboard for Day, Haskins and former Ohio State and current New Orleans Saints wide receiver Michael Thomas walked in the room.

"They took time to speak with me and tell me about their experiences in the program," McCord said, noting how he felt starstruck throughout the conversation. "Those were two awesome experiences talking with them. It really made me feel like a part of the family. It was a pretty cool experience."

The coaching staff had offers out to several other quarterbacks at the time, but McCord – who threw for a school-record 2,883 yards and 38 touchdowns to lead the Hawks to a state championship last fall – seemingly separated himself from the pack during those visits. A strong performance on the camp circuit this spring, which included position MVP honors at The Opening New Jersey Regional and an invitation to the Rivals Five-Star Challenge, also helped solidify his status as the staff's top target.

"I think what separates me from other quarterbacks is that I'm a winner, I'm very accurate and I'm more advanced mentally than a lot of other quarterbacks my age," McCord said. "I owe a lot of that to my coaches and my dad, but I think those three things really set me apart from others. Those three things are very important at Ohio State and in their system, too, so I think it's a perfect fit."

McCord's commitment notably had a ripple effect on the other quarterbacks, including La Grange Park (Ill.) Nazareth five-star J.J. McCarthy, with whom he's become friends in recent years. McCarthy grew up an Ohio State fan but committed to Michigan just a few weeks after McCord's decision and has since voiced his desire to turn the tide in the rivalry.

"I wouldn't say that changes our relationship too much," McCord said. "We both are very competitive, so I think that rivalry will be even more fun going against him and That Team Up North every year. I think it just adds another level of competition between us now that he's committed there."

Though he and five-star defensive end commit Jack Sawyer, who hails from Pickerington (Ohio) North, give the Buckeyes one of the top-rated recruiting classes in the country early in the cycle, McCord is already focused on surrounding himself with some of the nation's best prospects.

"I've been in contact with a bunch of guys," McCord said. "I've been talking to guys like (Steilacoom, Wash., four-star athlete) Emeka Egbuka and (Philadelphia Neumann Gorette four-star safety) Tysheem Johnson to try and start to build our 2021 class."

However, there's no doubt McCord's biggest target is his teammate at St. Joseph's, four-star wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr.

"He's one of my best friends off the field, so it would be a lot of fun to continue to play together and spend a few more years with him in school," McCord said. "I want him to make the best decision for himself, but – at the same time – he knows how badly I want him to commit to Ohio State. I don't really have to say too much to him."

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2021 QB Commit Could Be Future Of Offense

By GARRETT STEPIEN
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Before Kyle McCord could even think about an Ohio State commitment April 30, he had to prove himself as his high school's starting quarterback in the fall. Despite double-digit offers before he did so much as take a snap for Philadelphia St. Joseph's Prep in 2018, the sophomore quarterback was basically an unknown.

Then the school's offensive coordinator, Tim Roken, oversaw McCord's development from day one and knew the quarterback was going to be something special.

"It was interesting because a young man who really didn't play as a freshman for us became a starter," Roken, whom St. Joseph's promoted Dec. 23 to head coach, told BSB. "That showed a lot, from a character perspective, in choosing to come here because he could have gone many other places and been a four-year starter but didn't. So we were grateful for the opportunity to have him here and get a chance to coach him."

Once the Hawks' season got underway, though, McCord took off and never looked back. The 6-3½, 204-pounder led the Hawks to a 13-0 overall mark and the Pennsylvania 6A state championship.

By the numbers – he completed 201 of 302 passes (66.6 percent) for a school-record 2,883 yards and 38 touchdowns – McCord shone on his way to a well-deserved honor as Philadelphia Catholic League MVP, perhaps making the break-out campaign look easy from afar.

But to understand what McCord brings the Buckeyes as head coach Ryan Day's handpicked quarterback of the future for the 2021 recruiting class, knowing where he came from is equally important.

"He's very confident in his ability," Roken said. "I know there's a very fine line between confidence and cockiness, but he's not the type of kid who walks around with a big head and an ego."

Springing Into Action

After the Prep went 13-1 in 2017, ultimately falling short of the coveted Pennsylvania 6A state championship with its 41-21 loss to Gibsonia Pine-Richland, McCord's recruiting quickly heated up.

As the son of a Division-I quarterback – his father, Derek, played the position at Rutgers from 1988-92 – he brought a buzz into the 2018 spring evaluation period. Temple, Boston College, Rutgers and Michigan started the flurry of offers in February before Syracuse, West Virginia, Baylor and Penn State carried the scholarships momentum deep into June.

"He goes out in the spring and picks up a bunch of offers before he even steps on the field," Roken said. "A lot of people, I think, in the area and outside the (St. Joseph's) program thought, 'What's going on here? This kid hasn't even stepped on the field. He's picked up all these offers. What's this about?' He never flinched and he's the type of kid that's always been humble and is going to stay hungry and wants to learn because he wants to be great."

"He's got that mind-set. He took the spring and really developed into the summer and hit the ground running. The kids really rallied around him because you see



KYLE MCCORD/TWITTER

NEXT IN LINE – McCord completed 201 of 302 passes (66.6 percent) for a school-record 2,883 yards and 38 touchdowns as a sophomore to lead St. Joseph's Prep to the state championship.

the way he carries himself, on and off the field, he's a leader and the guys rallied around him. He went out and proved why, throughout the year, why he got all those offers leading into it."

Proving His Worth

McCord did not take long to validate his hype.

In the 2018 season opener against Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Prep, a neutral-site game played Sept. 8 at Rutgers, he started off with a statement 35-27 win.

The victory was the first of many on St. Joseph's national schedule.

"The game wasn't going our way for most of it, and we turned it around a little bit offensively in the second half," Roken said. "He led a drive down and threw a two-point conversion to take the lead with a defensive end trying to run right through him. (McCord) stared at (the defensive end) and put it on (the intended target), ended up completing it and we ended up winning the game in the fourth quarter."

The next weekend, the Hawks hosted Olney (Md.) Good Counsel and recorded a similar triumph, 34-27.

"We get down late and we have to put together a two-minute drive, and he didn't flinch," Roken said. "I told him, 'These are moments you're made for. This is what you live for. It's great competition and this is why you came here. Let's go get this thing done.' He went over, rallied his offensive line and the group, and they went down and put together a two-minute drive and won the ballgame."

The early adversity prepared McCord, after 10 straight double-digit wins, for the Dec. 8 state title against Harrisburg, Pa., which resulted in a 40-20 victory – but not before some early adversity.

"The interesting one is the final game where you have all this pressure leading up to the final game and everything, and he goes out and hadn't really thrown an interception since the St. Peter's game in week (one), and he throws an interception

on his first attempt and it goes pick-six to the house," Roken said. "So a lot of kids at his age, in that moment, would bury themselves."

"Our guys are phenomenal. They rallied around him and had the confidence in him. I got on the headset and said, 'Hey, we're not going to lose this 7-0, we're not going to win it 7-0. You made a mistake. It is what it is. Go back to work and do what you do.' And then it was three times down the field – bang, bang, bang – three possessions in a row that we go down and score and go up 21-7. And then we rallied and at the end of the half had a big (defensive) interception. The whole team took off in the second half, and we finished strong."

Finding The Fit

Since he assumed his new post as head coach Dec. 4, Ryan Day has wasted no time in getting acclimated to the recruiting classes of 2019 and '20, moving swiftly but diligently through the evaluation process for '21 and identifying Ohio State's potential quarterback of the future along the way.

With sophomore Justin Fields (6-3, 223) projected as the Buckeyes' starter for 2019, plus the July 2018 commitment of Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral four-star Jack Miller (6-4, 210) for 2020, Day and passing game coordinator/quarterbacks coach Mike Yurich made the move to offer several blue-chip prospects at the position in 2021.

Along the way, six signal callers reported scholarship offers from OSU: Dallas Parish Episcopal's Preston Stone (6-2, 205, May 10), Charlotte (N.C.) Myers Park's Drake Maye (6-4, 200, Nov. 4), La Grange (Ill.) Nazareth Academy's J.J. McCarthy (6-2, 180, Dec. 11), Washington (D.C.) Gonzaga's Caleb Williams (6-1, 190, Jan. 21), Harbor City (Calif.) Narbonne's Jake Garcia (6-2, 185, Jan. 29) and Cheshire (Conn.) Academy's Jack Brandon (6-3, 185, March 24).

"This has been a recent phenomenon

the last year or two, the amount of quality quarterbacks around the country that are really looking at Ohio State," Buckeye Grove recruiting analyst Marc Givler told BSB. "It just feels like it used to be that if you didn't have a guy locally, like Ohio or the Midwest or western Pennsylvania or something like that, then it might be a struggle to get a nationally ranked quarterback to go to Ohio State. That's not the case now. These guys are knocking down their doors. They had great options in 2021 already. Day has a lot of clout right now after what he did with Dwayne Haskins. And then even though he hasn't taken a snap yet, I think Justin Fields choosing to go play with Day also gave him an added boost with recruits and people around the country."

Sorting through OSU's 2021 options, Day handpicked McCord, who visited Feb. 2 and April 13 before committing 17 days later.

What He Brings

Part of McCord's comfort level with Day and Yurich circled back to Ohio State's offense and the scheme the Prep runs. Roken attended McCord's initial visit Feb. 2 and saw potential for his quarterback to have the same success Haskins had in 2018 as a pocket passer.

"It's funny, going out (to Columbus) and talking to Coach Yurich and Coach Day and talking about some of the things they're doing offensively, they're very similar to some of the things that we do here as well," Roken said. "I think the biggest thing that will carry over for him to the next level and that is the biggest comparison to what we do offensively is the down-the-field shots."

"What they've shown with Dwayne this year and just his vertical passing game, Kyle gets pegged as that pro-style guy, but he's an athletic kid that can kind of hurt you, be strong in the pocket and get outside of and be able to hurt you down the field. That's where they see the comparisons with him a little bit, between him

OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

and Dwayne, being able to be strong and standing in there in the pocket and spin the ball down the field but being able to escape and get outside and keep his eyes down the field and get the balls to his guys downfield and be able to hurt guys that way as well.

"He can get there if he needs to pick up a few. He's a deceptively athletic guy where he's going to get out and he's going to gain a couple. We've got to continually teach him to protect himself because he's a competitor and a tough kid and wants to lower the shoulder sometimes, but sometimes it's a little more of business decisions where you've got to protect your body a little bit.

"So he's done a great job with that and that's where I think the biggest comparisons (are) with him going into that offense and the things that they're looking for him to do. They're very comparable there."

After one year as the Buckeyes' starter, Haskins declared for the 2019 NFL draft and was selected with the 15th overall pick by the Washington Redskins. 247Sports sees the same type of high-ceiling potential for McCord.

"Wide-shouldered frame with good height and size," McCord's evaluation said. "Strong arm and accurate. Spins ball well. Poised under pressure. Great leadership qualities. Plays with high IQ. Can throw 15-yard out on line. Touch to throw over linebackers on intermediate routes. Has quick release with good arm angle. Fits balls into tight windows. Accurate throwing on run. Moves in pocket. Extends plays. Needs to continue to develop escapability. More consistency needed on deep balls. Multi-year starter at top-15 program. Projects to be an early round NFL draft pick."

With two more seasons of football left at the high school level before he can sign his letter of intent and enroll at OSU,

McCord has a long way to go before those evaluations can even be considered.

But with his college decision mapped out ahead of time, McCord can place the focus on putting himself in the best-possible position to get there under Day and Yurcich.

"You don't find many guys at his age with the arm power and arm strength, the accuracy, the footwork," Roken said. "At times, we're going to play with a lot of tempo and speed and we want to play really fast. So to be able to make decisions in split seconds where things are moving and now with the added run-pass option, we've had some more running quarterbacks in the past where you're reading first level. Now you add those second- and third-level reads. That was something that he progressed with and developed at that.

"And then it's just to continue to work our down-the-field passing game. We may mix in some more pro-style stuff to develop him in that sense, too, because we want to make sure that when these guys leave – whether it's Kyle or anybody – when these guys leave, they're prepared for wherever they go, college wise, to be able to make an impact. Guys have him pegged as a pro-style guy, so we want to work more of the drop backs and stuff like that for him – play actions and stuff like that for him.

"He's done a great job from a leadership standpoint. The hard part is, again, going into last year, he's had to lead more by example and now he's more confident in that sense and can lead by his voice a little bit as well. He's working his tail off in the weight room. I know some of the quarterbacks don't get known as the weight room warriors kind of guys, but he works his tail off in there. They all really hold themselves accountable, but he's done a great job of leading that tribe."

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5-Star WR Julian Fleming Commits To OSU

Ohio State got its top target May 31 when Julian Fleming announced his commitment. He took to Twitter in the morning and revealed the Buckeyes pledge through a video.

"When you see me, you see a five-star prospect," Fleming said. "You see a can't-miss football player. You see someone who's been given advantages because of my size, my speed and my potential. You see someone who can help your favorite team."

RECRUITING OUTLOOK Garrett Stepien

"But I am more than just a football player. I am a son, I'm a brother and I will become a man. I work when nobody else is looking so I can be what I'm destined to become – for me, my family, no one else. To you, I am a football player."

"To you, home is a place. To me, home is a feeling. To me, Ohio State is home. Go Bucks."

The five-star wide receiver from Catawissa (Pa.) Southern Columbia has long been on OSU's radar.

Before he revealed Ohio State with Alabama, Clemson, Georgia and Penn State among his five finalists, Fleming's road to the decision started Feb. 7, 2018, when the Buckeyes offered.

The 6-2, 199-pounder initially came to Columbus June 17, 2018, followed by a pair of visits later in the year – Nov. 3 for OSU's 36-31 win over Nebraska and Nov. 24 for its 62-39 victory against then-No. 4 Michigan.

Fleming first trimmed his list Dec. 25 when he named a top 10, cutting further Feb. 16 with a top six of Alabama, Clemson, Georgia, Ohio State, Oregon and Penn State.

The 247Sports composite's No. 6 overall prospect, No. 1 wide receiver and No. 1 player in Pennsylvania for 2020 followed the February update with trips to see the Tigers (March 9) and Buckeyes (March 23) around the Nittany Lions (Feb. 23 and March 16).

Of his five official visits, Fleming's first came April 12-14 for the Crimson Tide's spring game. Fleming was slated for an official visit with the Bulldogs the weekend of May 31-June 2 but ultimately canceled. He released his final five May 10.

Fleming's commitment brings OSU's 2020 class to nine pledges: Cincinnati St. Xavier five-star offensive tackle Paris Johnson (6-7½, 295); Montvale (N.J.) St. Joseph Regional four-star center Luke Wyppler (6-3½, 285); Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral four-star quarterback Jack Miller (6-4, 210); Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic four-star wide receiver Gee Scott (6-2½, 207); Rockwall, Texas, four-star wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba (6-1, 188); Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star defensive back Lejond Cavazos (6-1, 190); Cincinnati Elder three-star offensive tackle Jakob James (6-5, 275); and Norwalk, Ohio, three-star offensive tackle Trey Leroux (6-8, 355).

Fleming joins Scott and Smith-Njigba as the third wide receiver in the class,

with all three recruited by head coach Ryan Day and position coach Brian Hartline.

Top Target Sets OV To OSU

In May, one of the Midwest's top targets for the 2020 recruiting class set two of his five official visits, planning late-spring trips with a Big Ten emphasis.

First, Cameron Martinez officially visited Northwestern the weekend of May 17-19. The four-star athlete from Muskegon, Mich., had also set an official visit with the Buckeyes for the weekend of June 21-23.

Steve Willtong of 247Sports first reported the news. According to Allen Trieu of 247Sports, Michigan and Notre Dame are also in the running to land an official visit from Martinez, who would have three more available after the trips with the Wildcats and OSU.

The 5-11, 175-pounder is the 247Sports composite's No. 368 overall prospect, No. 23 athlete and No. 10 player in Michigan for 2020.

Among close to 30 offers, Martinez landed one Feb. 15 from Ohio State, which is recruiting him on both sides of the ball.

"I'm better with the ball in my hands," Martinez told BSB. "But naturally, I think I'm better at defense. A lot of teams give me the option of what I want to do, so it's really going to come down to how I feel and what I want to play. If I could, I would play both right now."

Day and Hartline have a vision for Martinez on offense, while co-defensive coordinators Greg Mattison and Jeff Hafley are fighting for his services on defense, particularly at the hybrid linebacker/safety "bullet" position.

"When they offered me ... it seemed like I was more on the defensive side," Martinez said. "I came down there (March 29) and Brian Hartline loved me on the offensive side. He thought he could see me at the H-back position like the K.J. Hill, Parris Campbell type because they're not really recruiting any H-backs right now."

"So he really liked me on that side. Coach Day really liked me on the offensive side. But Hafley and (special teams coordinator/assistant secondary coach Matt) Barnes and, of course, Mattison, they want me on defense. So they're kind of fighting over me right now."

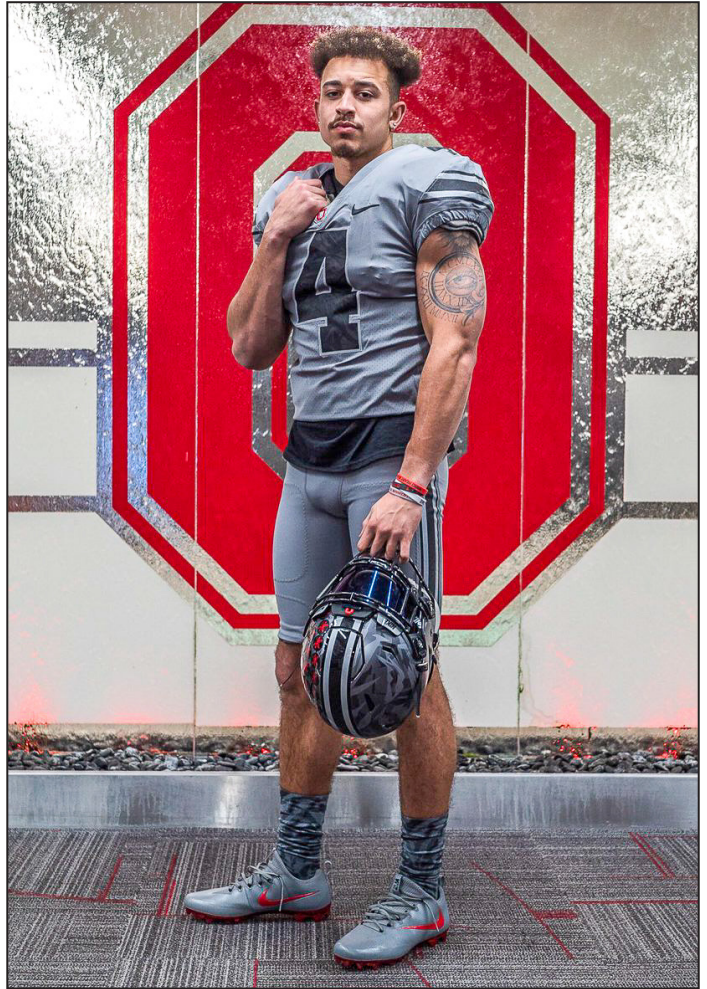
"So it's kind of going to come down to me. I think, personally, if I had to choose right now, I would maybe play defense because Coach Hafley's more of my guy. But I'm in contact with Hafley and Hartline a lot. They're cool."

The official visit will mark Martinez's first trip to Columbus since an unofficial visit March 29.

"A lot of it was with Coach Hafley, too, and Coach Day, but he's just an energetic guy," Martinez said of Hartline. "Every time I talk to people, they say there's no coach like Hartline. He showed me – he had a presentation for me, talked about (wide receiver potential) – he really gets the best out of his players. With a coach like that, that gets you better, it's good."

2020 4-Star CB Releases Final 5

A top target at a premium position, Clark Phillips included Ohio State in his final five May 1. The four-star cornerback



JULIAN FLEMING/TWITTER

BOOM – Pennsylvania five-star wide receiver Julian Fleming picked Ohio State over Alabama, Clemson, Georgia and Penn State.

from La Habra, Calif., continues to consider the Buckeyes, who are recruiting him with California, Notre Dame, Oregon and UCLA.

Phillips took to Twitter and revealed the news.

"Blessing to be where I am today," Phillips' tweet read.

As the 247Sports composite's No. 46 overall prospect, No. 4 cornerback and No. 9 player in California for the 2020 recruiting class, Phillips has climbed OSU's board since its offer Jan. 24.

The 5-10½, 178-pounder announced his top 12 in February before he visited Columbus for an Ohio State practice March 29 at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center.

Day and the Buckeyes sit in a solid position for Phillips, according to 247Sports national recruiting analyst Greg Biggins.

"He's probably going to take at least three of those (official visits late) in the spring, and I think he's going to make a late-summer decision," Biggins, who is based in Los Angeles, said May 3 on the 247Sports Recruiting Podcast. "Right now, if I were to 'crystal ball"

him anywhere, it would be to The Ohio State University. But watch out for Notre Dame. They've done a great job."

"He's already taken unofficial trips to all five of those schools, so Notre Dame is doing a great job and Cal is kind of hanging in there as well as probably the top West Coast school on his list. But I think the Buckeyes are in a pretty solid spot at this point."

Day and Hafley secured OSU's first cornerback for the 2020 class April 12 when Lejond Cavazos (6-1, 190) recommitted, and Phillips is among the short list of preferences to join the four-star defensive back from Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy.

As a junior in 2018 at La Habra, Phillips recorded 18 tackles and two interceptions for the Highlanders.

He played both ways for his high school team, starting at wide receiver and catching 54 receptions for 1,120 yards (22.4 average) and 19 touchdowns.

Phillips was among the top camp performers Feb. 10 at The Opening Regional in Los Angeles and clocked a verified time of 4.54 seconds in the 40-yard dash.

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

ASK AN ANALYST

With Lettermen Row's Jeremy Birmingham

Upon his Dec. 4 introduction as Ohio State's head football coach, Ryan Day said he wanted to prioritize Ohio. How has Day fared with in-state recruiting in the time since then?

"Clearly it's a priority for him and the coaching staff to recruit the state – not just in 2020, but they've already extended six or seven different 2021 offers, which is unheard of, really, at least in the last decade of Ohio State football recruiting because it was so stringent with Urban Meyer and his staff that they'd just wait until a kid was almost always heading into his senior year before they would even consider offering an Ohio kid.

"But the commitment from the staff is there. I think that they're seeing a little bit of – the truth is, so many kids in Ohio don't really have that desire to commit immediately. I think there's some lacking results when you think about some (2021) guys like (Pickerington [Ohio] Central wide receiver) Lorenzo Styles (6-1, 170) and (Ironton, Ohio, linebacker) Reid Carrico (6-3, 218). Previously, you'd expect those guys to commit immediately. Lorenzo Styles is a Buckeyes legacy. It's just a different world.

"But what they're doing is obvious. It's certainly been not just lip service. I think a lot of people just expected what had happened in the previous decade, which is, 'We're going to recruit Ohio more,' but then they don't. Some of that has to do with the fact that there's actually a lot more talent in Ohio right now. That's in the class of 2020 and 2021. That certainly helps. But I don't think you're going to ever see Ryan Day and this staff abandon recruiting nationally just to recruit Ohio because they have to recruit Ohio. It has to be because of talent."

Ohio State has its potential quarterback of the future for each of the next two recruiting classes, but depth is needed. How do Day and the staff

approach the position, particularly for 2020, and are there any names to keep an eye on?

"I think it's obvious that they're still going to need to take a 2020 quarterback to complement (Scottsdale [Ariz.] Chaparral four-star commitment) Jack Miller (6-4, 210). But if you look at what they've done over the past few weeks to address that position, they have addressed the immediate concerns.

"(Kentucky junior graduate transfer) Gunnar Hoak (6-4, 212) will be gone by 2021, (La Verne [Calif.] Bonita 2019 walk-on commitment) JP Andrade (6-3, 205) is a not a guy who I think you should expect to be there for 4-5 years. I think, if he ends up developing, you could see a Kory Curtis-type of situation where he walks on at Ohio State for two or three years and gets an opportunity to go play at a place like Bryant University or wherever, then you go take that scholarship offer (as a transfer).

"I think it's important for 2020 to add a quarterback, somebody who they can use and say, 'Hey, this guy's an athlete/quarterback.'

"Taking it way back, if you look back at the 2002 class, there was Justin Zwick who was the clear-cut quarterback and then you brought in Troy Smith at the very end of the class. Smith was the athlete, kick returner, quarterback, running back, whatever. That type of complementary addition makes it easier for the incoming bell cow like Jack to understand that this is a need-based issue, not necessarily wanting to have an insurance policy for him because Miller is an elite quarterback and one of the four or five best in the country. You don't risk rocking that boat unless it's something that he's on board with and that has been thoroughly explained."

Nationally, 2020 has potential for historic depth. As Ohio State fills in its class, Clemson is a main contender for top targets. How much

concern is there for the Buckeyes with the Tigers seemingly taking all of the blue-chip prospects out there on the board?

"Oh, they have to pay attention to it. You want to win at everything. Urban Meyer was really the first coach at Ohio State to acknowledge that. They did pay attention to the rankings, the recruiting rankings. They said that, 'If we're competing, we want to win.' But back in 2017, Ohio State signed (five) five-star players in that class. That's what you should do when you're coming off national championships and the College Football Playoffs.

"You have a coach (in Dabo Swinney) that's young and dynamic and has a long-term contract. Clemson plays in a league that they will own in the next decade or longer. And quite honestly, the Buckeyes have to be concerned, just like everyone else. But all it should do is force them to pick their game up and realize that, in college football's arms race, you're never really done building.

"They're going to have to continue to renovate, continue to innovate and, most importantly, Ryan Day and this team are going to have to win games. And when they do that, you're going to continue to see Ohio State be one of the top three or four recruiting teams in the country because their staff is young and dynamic and adaptable, and that's what you have to be in today's college football landscape. It's why (Alabama head coach) Nick Saban, despite the fact that his staff isn't young, continues to innovate with the best of the best. What Clemson's doing is remarkable, but it's not as unheard of as I think people want to pass it off. They're going to finish with six or seven five-star kids in that class, probably. Again, that's what Ohio State did in 2017. That's what Alabama does, pretty much, every other year. It's about maintaining that success. You do that by winning games on the field."

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OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

4-Star H-B Drennen Closing In On Decision

Continued From Page 20

Paris Johnson Jr. Transfers High Schools

To graduate early from high school and enroll early in college next spring, Ohio State 2020 five-star offensive tackle commitment Paris Johnson Jr. is transferring across Cincinnati from St. Xavier to Princeton.

While the practice is fairly common for college-bound football players, St. Xavier does not permit students to graduate early under any circumstances. Princeton head coach Mike Daniels confirmed the matter to BSB.

The 6-7½, 295-pound Johnson, the 247Sports composite's No. 7 overall prospect, No. 1 offensive tackle and No. 1 player in Ohio for 2020, pledged June 28, 2018, to the Buckeyes. He has, however, been involved with other schools since then, fielding interest and taking visits elsewhere since Dec. 4 when OSU announced the retirement of seven-year head coach Urban Meyer after the 2018 season.

With the Vikings, who went 3-7 in 2018 but will surely have higher expectations in the fall, Johnson joins two friends and top Ohio State targets in the 2020 four-star duo of defensive end Darrion Henry (6-6, 260) and outside linebacker Jaheim Thomas (6-5, 218). The trio has frequently taken visits together, such as to Alabama and Georgia, but also a March 30 trip to see the Buckeyes in which Day's photos with Johnson, Henry and Thomas went viral on Twitter.

Michael Drennen Nears End Of Recruitment

Late last June, Michael Drennen walked into the Woody Hayes Athletic Center, emerged from Urban Meyer's office with an offer and became one of Ohio State's top targets for the 2020 recruiting class.

Close to a year later, the four-star all-purpose back from nearby Dublin (Ohio) Coffman remains a priority prospect



MICHAEL DRENNEN/TWITTER

CLOSING TIME – Dublin (Ohio) Coffman four-star H-back Michael Drennen has been on Ohio State's radar for the past year and is set to make a decision in the coming months.

with Meyer's head-coaching baton passed to Day.

Living so close, Drennen has been to Ohio State frequently, and he has OSU atop his options.

"It's always great going to Ohio State because it's Ohio State," Drennen told BSB. "I'm from Ohio, so everybody's in my ear (saying), 'Ohio State, Ohio State.' I love Ohio State."

The 5-10½, 187-pounder has taken

visits to Ohio State for game days in the fall and several offseason return trips since then.

After he capped his Ohio Stadium experiences Nov. 24 when the Buckeyes beat Michigan 62-39, Drennen came back Dec. 15 with Dublin Coffman teammate and 2021 safety prospect A.J. Kirk (6-0, 200).

Drennen made two more return trips for spring camp in a three-day span

March 21 and 23, reconnecting with Day and running backs coach Tony Alford. His visits also included the April 13 spring game.

"Mostly, I'm not going to lie, I talk to Coach Day," Drennen said. "We text a lot. He's cool. He's a cool dude. Half the time we text – a lot of coaches text you mostly about football. We're just having normal conversations about life, for real, so he's a cool dude. I really like that."

With the play-calling duties as Ohio State's second-year offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach in 2018, Day's unit took off, featuring heavy doses for running backs and H-backs.

Drennen's potential future with the Buckeyes has been discussed at each spot.

While Alford wants Drennen to operate out of his room, he may get overruled by Day, who sees a player like the aforementioned Hill (6-0, 185) and redshirt freshman Jaelen Gill (6-0, 195) in the 247Sports composite's No. 199 overall prospect, No. 5 all-purpose back and No. 5 player from Ohio for 2020.

"Probably H-back," Drennen said of where he might end up. "Coach Alford, he's the running backs coach, so he wants me at running back. But I feel like (in) Coach Day's (offense), I feel like he thinks I'm more of an H-back, like a K.J. Hill or Jaelen Gill.

"I feel like I'm definitely a good running back. I've played running back my entire life. But when I do line up in the slot, I know what I'm doing and I feel very comfortable. I'm more comfortable than a lot of running backs (would be there), so I feel like that definitely sepa-

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rates me from everybody else.”

Tennessee (Feb. 15) and Alabama (March 26) are among the southeast schools standing out for Drennen after he made recent visits, although his choices continue to include offers from regional programs such as Penn State (Dec. 12) and Notre Dame (Jan. 26).

“Alabama, that’s just – it’s Alabama,” Drennen said. “It’s much different from any other school, for sure. Tennessee, I love going to Tennessee. I’ve been to Tennessee (several times since) my freshman year, so it’s my dad’s favorite school and he loves seeing me in that uniform. I’m definitely getting back there, for sure.”

As he navigates his recruitment, Drennen looks to schedule all five official visits between the summer and fall.

“I’m going to try to do most of my officials in the summer, but I’m going to probably do two in the fall, so I can see a few games,” Drennen said. “I’m going to narrow (the offer list) down late spring, early summer.”

Until he makes his next move, which most likely will include hometown OSU, Drennen focuses on all-around improvement after he capped his junior campaign with sharpened versatility from running back to slot receiver.

“I feel like, since I’m playing with mostly people my age now, so I’m getting older,” Drennen said. “I just feel like I can see the game differently now. It’s much slower than when I was a freshman, and I just feel like I’m getting better overall – catching the ball, bursting in, elusiveness, all of that.”

2021 In-State WR Becomes Top Target

Ohio State opened its one-day position camps June 9 of last year in Columbus with an eyebrow-raising offer to a rising sophomore wide receiver at the time.

After his standout performance against defensive players in the 2019 and 2020 recruiting classes, Jayden Ballard was a rare instance of an in-state underclassman on the Buckeyes’ board so early.

OSU’s only other 2021 scholarship extended in Ohio at the time was at Pickerington North defensive end Jack Sawyer (6-5, 220), who picked up his bid April 9, 2018, and committed Feb. 3.

Over the past 12 months, Ballard has quietly navigated the process. The 6-2, 175-pounder lets his game do the bulk of the talking.

He followed a breakout 2018 season at Massillon Washington, in which the Tigers went 14-1 overall, with an overpowering performance March 31 during The Opening Regional Canton inside the Paul L. David Athletic Training Center.

From intermediate routes to streaks downfield and jump balls, Ballard joined Martinez among the camp’s most dominant receivers on the day.

“The Opening was way harder than some of the corners I go against,” Ballard said. “They’re much bigger than I am.”

The Opening offered Ballard an opportunity to showcase his skills, and he did, recording a 4.08-second 20-yard shuttle and 33.30-inch vertical jump before clocking a 4.60-second 40-yard dash May 5 at Massillon Washington’s college showcase, the latter of which Ohio State attended.

“(The process) hasn’t been that tough,” Ballard said. “And I haven’t

been thinking about that (recruiting) stuff yet because I’m only a sophomore, so I’m just trying to keep going, moving forward.”

Ballard’s recruitment spiked after the Buckeyes entered the equation with roughly 20 offers in total, the latest from Oregon (Feb. 19) and Michigan State (May 8).

Beyond plans to see the Ducks at some point in the summer, Ballard’s involvement with home-state OSU has been active.

After gameday visits in the fall, the spring brought Ballard back to Ohio Stadium for the April 13 spring game, building the bond with Day and Hartline.

“I like them both a lot, Coach Hartline and Coach Day,” said Ballard, who has weekly communication with Day and Hartline, the latter of whom is also from Stark County as a North Canton, Ohio, native. “(Hartline is) personable.”

Prior to the annual scrimmage, Ballard stopped by campus Feb. 2 for junior day.

“It was about) just talking to Coach Hartline and seeing more stuff,” Ballard said.

While he has potential down the road to become a top receiver at the next level, Ballard puts his recruitment on the back burner, working hard, knowing he has big shoes to fill in the Tigers’ 2019 campaign.

“Just getting really strong in the weight room and getting a little more faster,” Ballard said of the offseason focus before he enters his junior year. “Becoming

more of a go-to receiver. Without (2019 Michigan State wide receiver signee) Tre’Von Morgan, I’ll have to step up.”

Spring Evaluation Period Produces Myriad Offers

Day and coaches hit the road for the spring evaluation period in May and passed out numerous offers.

Among the bids, the following came for the 2020 class: Norfolk (Va.) Maury four-star wide receiver KeAndre Lambert (6-0½, 172); Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter’s Prep outside linebacker Cody Simon (6-1, 218); Draper (Utah) Juan Diego Catholic four-star defensive end Xavier Carlton (6-7, 262); The Colony, Texas, three-star safety Christian Gonzalez (6-1, 193); Chattanooga (Tenn.) McCallie School four-star defensive end Jay Hardy (6-4, 270); and River Ridge (La.) John Curtis three-star athlete Corey Wren (5-9, 170).

The bulk of the scholarship offers were for the 2021 recruiting cycle, including Kingsland (Ga.) Camden County athlete Shawn Hardy (6-3, 190); Grandview, Texas, tight end Dامتريوس Crownover (6-6, 235); Tampa (Fla.) Jefferson tight end Gage Wilcox (6-4, 228); Matthews (N.C.) Weddington all-purpose back Will Shipley (5-11, 198); Baltimore Mount Saint Joseph wide receiver Dont’e Thornton (6-4, 179); Denton (Texas) Ryan defensive end Ja’Tavion Sanders (6-3½, 220); Blairstown (N.J.) Blair Academy defensive end Aaron Armitage (6-4, 240); Henderson (Nev.) Liberty tight end Moliki Mataavao (6-6, 240); Orem, Utah,

offensive tackle Kingsley Suamataia (6-5, 288); and Bellaire (Texas) Episcopal offensive tackle Cullen Montgomery (6-5, 290).

Aurora (Colo.) Cherokee Trail tight end Sam Hart (6-5, 225); Littleton (Colo.) Heritage tight end Terrance Ferguson (6-5, 220); Lexington (Ky.) Frederick Douglass offensive guard Jager Burton (6-3, 271); Fort Collins (Colo.) Fossil Ridge offensive tackle Trey Zuhn (6-5, 260); Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian athlete Ethan Calvert (6-3, 230); Upland, Calif., outside linebacker Jonathan Flowe (6-1, 195); Lakeville (Minn.) South offensive tackle Riley Mahlman (6-8, 260); Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha linebacker Greg Penn (6-1, 225); Mountain Island Charter athlete Gabriel Stephens (6-3, 195); Miami Northwestern safety Kamren Kitchens (5-10, 174); and Ramseur (N.C.) Eastern Randolph athlete Kaemen Marley (6-2, 206) also landed offers from the Buckeyes in recent weeks.

More bids were offered for the class of 2022, including Kingsland (Ga.) Camden County running back Jamie Felix (5-10, 190); Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter’s Prep defensive end Keith Miles Jr. (6-3½, 261); Argyle (Texas) Liberty Christian safety Cristian Driver (5-11, 170); and Fort Worth (Texas) Nolan Catholic running back Emeka Megwa (6-0, 200).

For the latest in Ohio State football recruiting news, be sure to check out BuckeyeSports.com, free to all BSB print subscribers, daily.

A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

30 Years Ago – 1989

While Sarasota, Fla., defensive back Chico Nelson and Mount Holly, N.J., linebacker Alonzo Spellman passed their college entrance exams, two other recruits from Ohio State’s 1989 class were in academic hot water.

San Diego linebacker Tyrone Morrison failed to pass his latest Scholastic Aptitude Test and took the exam again June 2, making him the only incoming recruit who had not satisfied the Prop 48 requirement. If he passed the test, he would maintain freshman eligibility.

Chillicothe, Ohio, defensive lineman Chuck Jones fell one-half credit short of high school graduation, and the Buckeyes were forced to withdraw his scholarship offer.

20 Years Ago – 1999

Signed to Ohio State’s 1999 recruiting class, Miami Killian offensive lineman Bryce Bishop (6-5, 315) was ready for life with the Buckeyes.

Despite some problems arising prior to National Signing Day in February – he had received an in-home visit Jan. 31 from OSU assistant coach Bill Conley during the NCAA-designated quiet period before official visits to nearby Miami and Florida State – Bishop never doubted his future in Columbus.

“I knew the whole time I was going to Ohio State,” Bishop said. “I just wanted to take all of my visits first.”

15 Years Ago – 2004

Ohio State’s 2005 recruiting class grew by two defensive linemen in May when Ryan Williams (6-5, 240) of Mission Viejo, Calif., and Todd Denlinger (6-3,

280) of Troy, Ohio, committed to the Buckeyes.

Williams and Denlinger joined Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward offensive lineman Alex Boone (6-8, 296); Lancaster, Ohio, offensive lineman Jim Cordle (6-5, 285); and Cleveland Glenville defensive back Jamario O’Neal (6-1, 190) as OSU’s early pledges.

“I’ve always wanted to be a Buckeye,” said Williams, who was born about an hour southwest of Columbus in Washington Court House before he and his family moved to California. “Ever since I was born, it was the team I wanted to play for.”

10 Years Ago – 2009

As the Buckeyes looked to build their 2010 recruiting class, they had two quarterbackbacks on the radar in Cincinnati Moeller’s Andrew Hendrix (6-3, 220) and Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian’s Nick Montana (6-1, 185).

Originally, Ohio State had told Montana – the son of Pro Football Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Montana – that it would not offer another signal caller after head coach Jim Tressel did so Feb. 4. However, after the May 24 offer to Hendrix, Montana was still considering OSU.

“I know there’s a lot of speculation and everything that they’re dropping (on my list) because they offered another quarterback, but they’re not at all,” Montana said. “I talked to Coach Tressel about it. I told them, ‘I’m not going to think any less of you guys because you have to do what you have to do.’”

Five Years Ago – 2014

Ohio State ended a drought of nearly

four months on the recruiting trail May 27 when Plains (Ohio) Athens quarterback Joe Burrow (6-4, 210) committed to the Buckeyes’ 2015 class.

The move marked OSU’s first pledge since Feb. 11, as Burrow stayed home over offers from West Virginia and Michigan, among others.

“It was huge,” said Burrow, who was the nation’s No. 26 quarterback at the time. “It was a big monkey off my back to finally commit, especially to a great school like Ohio State. The opportunity to win multiple national championships is great. My family and I have talked about that over the last couple of weeks and said if they do offer, that’s great, I will commit. And if they don’t, so be it. But it happened.”

One Year Ago – 2018

While the Buckeyes pursued Lewis Center (Ohio) Olen tangy Orange’s Zach Harrison – the 247Sports composite’s No. 2 overall prospect at the time for the 2019 recruiting class – the five-star defensive end’s quiet personality kept Ohio State’s recruitment in the shadows.

With offers from Clemson, Michigan and Penn State, among others, Harrison (6-6, 240) had OSU among the favorites as defensive line coach Larry Johnson led the process.

“The defensive line pedigree is something that, obviously, gets (Harrison’s) attention from what they’ve done recently,” Olen tangy Orange head coach Zebb Schroeder told BSB. “The success the program has had and the relevance, not only on a local scale but also on a national scale. I think he understands that Coach (Urban) Meyer runs an elite program. That’s Ohio State. Ohio State is a traditional, elite program, and so are the other three or four schools recruiting him.”