

Scouting Report: 2021 Four-Star CB Jakailin Johnson



Despite college football's surprise dead period instituted earlier this week as a result of the coronavirus, Ohio State is still very much active on the recruiting trail, calling and texting with its top prospects in hopes that it can still have the 2021 class nearly wrapped up by the time the 2020 seasons kicks off. It took a pretty massive step towards that goal today, landing a pledge from four-star 2021 cornerback Jakailin Johnson.

1000% Committed #gobucks #BIA pic.twitter.com/Y97GMz1I6T

— JK Johnson (@jakailin6) March 15, 2020

Johnson's pledge gives Ohio State 11 commitments in the class, and it also serves as the first major recruiting win for defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs, once known as an ace recruiter during his first stint in Columbus. Johnson was considering top schools like Clemson, Florida and Georgia, so it seems as though the newest member of the Buckeye staff has not lost his touch after two years out of the recruiting game.

On the field, Ohio State is getting essentially the prototypical Coombs cornerback. Johnson is 6-foot-1, with a good frame that he can grow into despite sitting around just 170 pounds right now. The potential to get stronger is a huge thing for Ohio State at cornerback, and Johnson fits the mold perfectly.

In play style, Johnson projects pretty similarly to former Ohio State star Jeff Okudah. He's long and physical, starting at the line of scrimmage and continuing through the catch. He relies heavily on his elite athletic ability to make plays, and while he's certainly not sloppy in technique, the majority of his ability right now is that athleticism. That's fine, because with cornerbacks (and all players), technique is quite a bit easier to teach than a 4.45 40-time, which Johnson appears to possess.

While that obviously applies to coverage (more on this shortly), it also carries over into Johnson's tackling, which is actually pretty strong for a player at a position that isn't expected to tackle a whole lot, especially one that isn't carrying a whole lot of weight on his frame.

He does a very good job of getting low, and while he needs to improve with wrapping up through contact, the base is there for Johnson to become a very strong rugby-style tackler in Columbus. He won't have to do a ton of hitting, given that he'll likely play on the outside at the next level, but it's still a valuable skill to have.

The biggest value of Johnson however is of course in coverage, where he's quite a bit more versatile than most high school cornerbacks. Typically corners will enter the next level knowing either man or zone coverage, while needing to pick up the other to fit into most systems (like Ohio State's).

Johnson has a pretty good understanding of both. He's better in man than he is in zone, in large part because of his athletic ability, but he has good instincts and will have an easy transition into Ohio State's cover 3 system. He's already showing off very fluid hips that will help him when dropping into a deep third zone, and he's without any significant bad habits. He's a bit too physical when the ball is in the air, which could get him in trouble, but everything that needs to be modified about his game right now is very fixable.

With quite a few Buckeye defensive backs set to depart in the next few seasons, Johnson is an exciting prospect for Ohio State as someone who could handle pretty significant playing time very early in his career. He's more college ready than anyone that Ohio State landed in 2019 or 2020, and that should show up pretty quickly after he enrolls at OSU.