

Top Storylines For Ohio State Recruiting As Early Signing Period Set To Begin



The Early Signing Period for football recruiting begins on Wednesday and lasts through Friday, and Ohio State remains active as it tries to put the finishing touches on the program's 2024 recruiting class, which has seen some struggles over the past few weeks.

The Buckeyes have lost a pair of recruits to Miami, including Chicago St. Ignatius five-star defensive tackle Justin Scott (6-4, 310) and Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star running back Jordan Lyle (6-0, 180). And a target on the defensive line - Bay City, Texas, four-star defensive lineman Carlton Jones (6-3, 285) - announced his pledge to USC on Monday.

But, Ohio State is looking to hold on to the rest of its recruits and perhaps make a few late additions to the class. Here are the top storylines for the Buckeyes as the Early Signing Period is set to begin:

Holding On To Jeremiah Smith

The biggest focus for Ohio State entering the Early Signing Period is simple; at all costs, hold onto Opa Locka (Fla.) Chaminade-Madonna Prep five-star wide receiver Jeremiah Smith (6-3, 198).

Smith has been pledged to Ohio State for over a year at this point, and it would be a massive blow for the Buckeyes to lose him at the last moment to any of his in-state schools in Florida, Florida State or Miami, all of whom have been heavily targeting Smith despite his commitment to Ohio State.

He is the undisputed top-ranked recruit in the class, regardless of position, and would represent another significant win on the recruiting trail for offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach Brian Hartline. But losing him at this juncture would paint Ohio State's class in an entirely different light, and it's a reality that the Buckeyes have to avoid.

Keeping Eddrick Houston, Jeremiah McClellan

Smith is not the only Ohio State pledge that schools are attempting to flip, however, as both Buford, Ga., five-star defensive end Eddrick Houston (6-3, 265) and St. Louis Christian Brothers College four-star wide receiver Jeremiah McClellan (6-0, 190) are receiving overtures from other programs.

Houston's importance to the class on the defensive side of the ball is similar to Smith's on the offensive side - Ohio State cannot lose him. Houston seemed locked in with the Buckeyes for most of his recruitment but took recent visits to Clemson and Alabama, the latter always representing a potential obstacle in terms of taking recruits from other schools.

While a flip does not seem imminent for Houston like it has for other recruits - namely Lyle - Ohio State will still need to battle over the next few days to retain Houston's signature during the Early Signing Period, as he is one of just two defensive linemen currently committed to the Buckeyes following Scott's flip to the Hurricanes.

McClellan, meanwhile, is not at the level of Houston or Smith, but Ohio State is still fighting hard to keep him away from Oregon and Missouri, teams that have stepped up their pursuit as of late. The expectation is that both Houston and McClellan will sign with Ohio State, but the other programs trying to flip them are not making things easy.

On The Flip Side

Ohio State is trying to stave off flips for Smith, Houston and McClellan, but the Buckeyes are trying to flip a few prospects as well, including Clinton, N.C., four-star defensive lineman Amaris Williams (6-3, 270), who is committed to Florida, and Esko (Minn.) Lincoln Secondary four-star safety Koi Perich (6-1, 195).

Williams' potential addition would be especially important given Ohio State's other struggles recruiting on the defensive line, but as it stands, most project that Williams will either stick with his current pledge to Florida or flip to Auburn. Perich, meanwhile, is projected to stick with his commitment to the Golden Gophers, which would leave Ohio State West Orange (N.J.) Seton Hall Prep four-star Jaylen McClain (6-0, 185) and Fort Myers (Fla.) Bishop Verot three-star Leroy Roker (6-1, 170).

That said, Ohio State will still work over the next few days to try and land both prospects, and overall work toward a strong finish on the recruiting trail during the Early Signing Period.