

2021 4-Star S A.J. Kirk, Younger Brother Of Former Buckeye Mike Doss, Discusses Ohio State Offer

By the end of the morning Thursday at Ohio State's skills/big man camp on the Woody Hayes Athletic Center's outdoor practice fields in Columbus, A.J. Kirk did enough to leave no doubt.

"When you go out and camp anywhere, you've just got to basically go out there and (compete)," Kirk said. "There's a thousand people out here trying to grind for the same thing (an offer). I definitely felt like (one was on the line)."

After an interception in 1-on-1 coverage drills, the highlight of Kirk's standout performance throughout the hot and steamy three-hour morning, Buckeyes head coach Ryan Day was sold.

"That message was, basically, 'A.J., you went out there and performed to the best of your ability,'" Kirk said. "It was right after I caught a pick in front of everybody. (Day) said, 'A.J., we need some talent like that in our program. We feel like you could be that.'"

Once the skills session was complete, Day took Kirk to his office in the team facility and he extended an offer — an emotional experience for the Dublin (Ohio) Coffman 2021 four-star safety, who has long been on OSU's radar as the younger brother of former safety Mike Doss (1999-2002).

"He's had a big impact on my life, man," Kirk said of Doss, who was also there. "It means a lot, being in town with the biggest college in the state. They feel like you can make a big impact for their program and it just means a lot. But there's room for more improvement."

Still hungry to get better, Kirk understood the message from Doss, who fought back tears when the 6-0, 200-pounder picked up the coveted Ohio State offer.

"His reaction — he got a little teary eyed, but he just said, 'A.J., that just means you've got to go out here and work a little harder, each and every day,'" Kirk said, "because (Doss) said, 'You're going to have a target on your back and everyone's going to be wanting to come after you.'"

The Buckeyes marked Kirk's 15th offer — with Michigan (June 20), Penn State (Dec. 12) and Notre Dame (Jan. 26) among the others — a meaningful opportunity as a local legacy.

Kirk made multiple visits throughout the fall with Dublin Coffman teammate and four-star all-purpose back Michael Drennen (5-10 1/2, 187), who is among OSU's top 2020 targets.

In two weeks, Ohio State's annual Friday Night Lights camp — slated for June 21 at Ohio Stadium — will run with Kirk ready to compete once again in front of Day and the coaching staff.

"They basically wanted to see me compete at their camp and be best one of the best recruits out there," Kirk said. "They said they wanted to see my foot speed and see how I competed in 1 on 1s."

Among the competition, Kirk went to work against Massillon (Ohio) Washington 2021 four-star wide

receiver and top Buckeyes target Jayden Ballard (6-2, 175) and held his own.

He showcased athleticism and physicality in front of co-defensive coordinators Jeff Hafley (secondary coach) and Greg Mattison (SAM linebackers coach), plus linebackers coach Al Washington, who see him as a fit for OSU's new hybrid linebacker/safety "bullet" position.

"I talk to Coach Washington (the most). I give him a call and we talk it up," Kirk said. "Yeah, I talk to him as well. (Knew him at Michigan, too.) I like Coach Washington because he's always a home, family guy and he had the opportunity to come home and he took the opportunity."

What comes next for Kirk?

Beyond the tentative plan for the short drive back to Columbus two Fridays from now, Kirk takes a day-by-day approach as he processes his latest offer.

"Mike, when he came here, it was a whole different program and he always told me, 'A.J., when you feel comfortable, just take the (best) option,'" Kirk said. "He said, 'I'm going to support you, 100 percent, no matter what.'"

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