

Day Provides Outlook On 2023 Recruiting Class As Early Signing Period Opens



Ohio State saw much of its top-10 2023 recruiting class fall into place with 19 of the Buckeyes' commits signing their National Letter of Intent on the first day of the early signing period Wednesday.

While head coach Ryan Day welcomed a new crop of players to the Ohio State football program, questions continued to swirl regarding the Buckeyes' NIL and transfer portal strategies and the state of recruiting in college football as a whole. Although the recruiting world remains in flux, Day wanted the focus to remain on Ohio State's 19 signees.

"For me, on a day like today, these 19 guys that have signed right now, they deserve the recognition," Day said. "It's a great group. I think when you look at the quality of the people that we're bringing in, I think that's the focus right now. It has to be for us, not so much who we don't get, but who are we bringing into the program.

"I'm proud of our guy and they're going to have an unbelievable opportunity at Ohio State, for sure."

As it stands, Ohio State's recruiting class only trails No. 4 Texas, No. 3 Miami (Fla.), No. 2 Georgia and No. 1 Alabama and carries several key pieces for the future.

The Buckeyes secured another top-tier crop of receivers, led by Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage wideout Brandon Inniss (6-0, 190), the lone five-star in the class, and Rolesville (N.C.) four-star Noah Rogers (6-2, 195). As Bradenton (Fla.) IMG Academy four-star Carnell Tate (6-2, 180) and Zephyrhills (Fla.) Wiregrass Ranch four-star Bryson Rogers rounds out the receiver class. Pierre (S.D.) T.F. Riggs four-star quarterback Lincoln Kienholz (6-3, 185)

"You look at Brandon, Carnell, Noah and Bryson, I think all four of these guys are going to be really good players for us," Day said. "All four of them are looking to come in and make an impact."

Ohio State also bolstered its offensive line with the additions of Findlay (Ohio) four-star Luke Montgomery (6-5, 280), Dayton (Ohio) Wayne four-star Joshua Padilla (6-4, 280), Middletown (Ohio) Lakota East four-star Austin Siereveld (6-5, 320) and Greenwich (Conn.) Brunswick School three-star Miles Walker (6-6, 285). Day said that Montgomery can play at all five positions, while adding that Walker will start at tackle, Padilla at center and Siereveld at guard.

"I thought (offensive line coach) Justin (Frye) did an excellent job," Day said. "We have three offensive linemen from Ohio and also Miles from Connecticut. I really think all three (of the Ohio guys) have the ability to make an impact right away. These are guys who we've had in camp and seen work live."

There was, however, a noticeable absence on Ohio State's offensive recruiting board. The Buckeyes enter the Early Signing Period without a running back in tow. Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) American Heritage four-star back Mark Fletcher (6-1, 225) was originally supposed to be a member of the Buckeyes' 2023 class but decommitted from Ohio State on Nov. 16 before signing with Miami (Fla.) on Wednesday.

Despite their inability to secure a running back at this point in the recruiting process, Day said he feels comfortable about the position as currently constructed on the roster.

"When you looked at this year at running back, we have pretty decent depth there," Day said. "With five guys there, if we had somebody there that we really liked, we were going to take him. (I) didn't feel like we needed to, but we're always going to look to upgrade if we possibly can or add somebody to the roster that we think could help us."

Ohio State also saw some disappointment on the defensive front, missing out on a pair of five-star defensive end prospects that they heavily pursued in Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco Matayo Uiagalelei (6-5, 265) — who committed to Oregon — and Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep Keon Keeley (6-6, 242) signed a pact with Alabama. Another target in Venice (Fla.) five-star Damon Wilson (6-4, 230) committed to Georgia on Wednesday.

The Buckeyes did, however, flip Indianapolis Lawrence Central four-star edge rusher Joshua Mickens (6-5, 225) from LSU on Wednesday.

"We felt like we were in pretty good position with a couple of guys, and it didn't work out in the end," Day said. "Josh, to add him to the class was great. He's a guy that, he's from Indiana and he's very athletic — he's a basketball player. We had him in camp. For him to make the decision down the stretch was big for us."

The Buckeyes looked to strengthen its secondary, which held just six scholarship cornerbacks entering the 2022 season. Ohio State added a pair of corners in Waxahachie (Texas) four-star Calvin Simpson-Hunt (6-0, 175) and Cincinnati Winton Woods four-star Jermaine Mathews (6-0, 175). OSU also added a pair of safeties in West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star Malik Hartford (6-2.5, 175) and Cocoa (Fla.) four-star Cedrick Hawkins (6-0, 175).

"Being a three-safety defense, there are just more numbers there," Day said. "We'll continue to look at that and try to add to that."