

Five-Star 2021 OT Nolan Rucci Commits To Wisconsin



Ohio State was firmly among the programs in contention for Lititz, Pa., five-star 2021 offensive tackle Nolan Rucci, but the Buckeyes weren't included in his final five schools and ultimately weren't the pick for Rucci, who announced his commitment to Wisconsin Tuesday evening.

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— Nolan Rucci (@nolanrucci) September 8, 2020

Rucci explained his decision to CBS Sports HQ following his commitment.

"I love how coach Rudy (UW offensive line coach Joe Rudolph) coaches his guys. The development is obvious," Rucci told CBS Sports HQ. "You see the guys that they're putting in the NFL in recent years and the guys that they're going to be putting in the NFL. So, I'm excited to be part of that process and make my mark.

"Can't wait to be a Badger. Let's go 'dubs.' "

The 6-foot-8 Rucci will be joining his brother Hayden, a redshirt freshman tight end with the Badgers, in Madison next season. He picked Wisconsin over a final five that included Clemson, Michigan, Notre Dame and Penn State. The Nittany Lions were long considered the leaders in this recruitment because Rucci's dad, Todd, played offensive line for Penn State in the 1990s before a seven-year career in the NFL.

Notably missing from that group was Ohio State, which had served as a constant in Rucci's recruitment for several years. He took a visit to Columbus in April of 2019, but the Buckeyes weren't able to get him back to Columbus as the two sides split and focused their interest elsewhere. For Ohio State, that interest went primarily to 2021 commits Ben Christman and Donovan Jackson, along with top prospects like Alabama commit J.C. Latham and Kentucky commit Jager Burton.

With Latham, Burton and Rucci off the board and Ohio State still searching for one more tackle and one more guard in this class, the remaining targets have become fairly obvious. At the top of the list by a significant margin is five-star Fairfax, Va., offensive tackle Tristan Leigh. Leigh is considered the No. 11 player in the 247Sports composite and Ohio State is firmly in the running for his commitment, but has ground to make up if it wants to beat Alabama, Clemson, LSU and Oklahoma, all of which are vying hard for Leigh.

Behind Leigh, Oak Park (MI.) four-star tackle Rayshaun Benny has gotten a look but appears to be heavily favoring the in-state Wolverines, while Brentwood (TN.) Academy three-star guard Noah Josey and Deerfield (MA.) Academy three-star tackle Bennett Pitcher both look to be long-shot backup plans if Ohio State misses on its top targets.