

Ohio Four-Star Safety Malik Hartford Commits To Ohio State



Ohio State gained its sixth commitment in 2023 on Wednesday, as West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West four-star safety Malik Hartford (6-3, 175) issued a verbal commitment to the Buckeyes.

Hartford is the No. 146 overall prospect and No. 11 safety in the class, and committed to Ohio State over his other top schools that included Cincinnati, Kentucky, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame and West Virginia.

“The overall program,” Hartford said of why he committed to Ohio State. “It’s a great program. I have plenty of opportunities going there. I want to get developed and they can do that.

“I’m going to be a hard worker, give effort on every play. I love the game so I’m going to give it my all.”

Hartford – who ranked as just the No. 225 prospect last November – saw his recruitment blow up as the calendar shifted to 2022. He held offers from Cincinnati, Indiana Kentucky, Michigan State, Nebraska and Purdue in early January, but after getting offered by the Buckeyes on Jan. 22, he received further offers from Michigan, Notre Dame and Tennessee in a matter of days.

He made a visit to Ohio State in January to receive his offer and returned in early March. The addition of safeties coach Perry Eliano gave a boost to Ohio State, as Eliano was Hartford’s recruiter at Cincinnati, who appeared to be the main competition for the Buckeyes.

Hartford is also the No. 4 prospect in Ohio, meaning that the Buckeyes have three of the top four in-state prospects committed. Findlay four-star offensive lineman Luke Montgomery (6-5, 270) leads the pack, while Huber Heights Wayne four-star offensive lineman Josh Padilla (6-4, 265) is the third-ranked prospect in Ohio. No. 2, Mentor four-star defensive lineman Brenan Vernon (6-5, 275), is committed to Notre Dame.

Ohio State is also in the mix to land Middletown Lakota East four-star offensive lineman Austin Siereveld (6-5, 315), who is ranked No. 323 overall and the sixth-best prospect in Ohio.