

Ohio State Director Of Player Personnel Mark Pantoni Breaks Down The No. 2 Recruiting Class In The Country



Along with head coach Ryan Day, Ohio State's director of player personnel Mark Pantoni discussed the Buckeyes' second-ranked recruiting class in the nation during a Zoom call with members of the media upon the beginning of the early-signing period on Dec. 16.

What follows is a bullet-point rundown paraphrasing what Pantoni, who is also assistant athletic director, said today:

Zen Michalski?

- This summer I gave my staff a project. I gave everyone on my staff a conference to look at committed players. Zane Stevens had the ACC, and we did our homework, found out he put on all this weight, and once we saw him on film as a senior, we showed Coach Stud and wanted to bring him in.

Zoom calls?

- We had the whole class on a Zoom call. One was this the parents and we had like a fun a game show. And the second call was more serious where we talked about their expectations. They were awesome, they handled it and showed great leadership.

Takeaways from Zoom moving forward?

- Zoom has been really good in a lot of ways for guys that could not make it to campus. We have some good presentations that we can put out there to show kids what Ohio State is about.

Important to get talented Ohio guys?

- It's definitely critical. Ohio is our main priority early on. We want the backbone of the class to be Ohio and the Midwest. We told them now that you guys are committed, go build this class. The commits and our players are the best recruiters.

Lack of drama in 2021 class?

- Culture fit is the biggest thing for any kid we recruit. It just shows the quality of kids we are recruiting. We didn't have a lot of drama.

Where does this Ohio State stack up for you?

- Definitely a strong group. They're all great kids from great families. Michael Hall was the one who didn't have many offers from all, and then he just blew up through the rankings.

RB success?

- He did nothing different. Tony (Alford) is one of our best recruiters. He's one of our hardest workers. He's relentless. He's in constant communication. TreVeyon (Henderson) and Evan (Pryor) hit it off well, and they were playing Madden every day and became close early on.

Aspirations for No. 1 class?

- I agree with Ryan (Day) 100 percent. It's not a big deal. We've had classes that were No. 4/No. 5 before and we probably had more first- and second-round draft picks than those other classes.

Selling OSU? Lack of visits?

- What the kids saw as they got added into this group chat was the quality of kids we had committed. They are great people, great students. There's not a lot to sell because Ohio State is great.

Resetting expectations for star-studded freshman?

- It's two words. Mickey Marotti. He de-recruits them pretty quick. These guys have no idea what hard work is until they see the veterans and see what being a pro is. But these guys are all great kids with high expectations to be great. Julian Fleming is a good example. Same with Paris Johnson. They want to be great. They came in last year and just went to work.

Jack Sawyer helping organize prospect-led Buckeye Bash?

- It just shows for Sawyer and his family to put that together, their leadership and they are great people.

Carrying success over to 2022 class?

- We tried to keep the momentum going. A lot of the focus now is back on '22. We've got a great class going and we've got leaders in that class who are doing a great job.

Potentially adding anyone else in 2021?

- We're going to see after the season if we have any attrition. And we will evaluate if we need to add a high school player or maybe look to the portal for a transfer once this one-time transfer rule passes.

Your role in success?

- The head coach always drives the train. My job is just to help them and make their job easier. Winning is a great recipe for recruiting. The more we win, the better it goes.

Recruiting kids across the country?

- The brand of Ohio State is so powerful. The kids understand it. Being able to see us on national TV. And we've had great players who went to the NFL in the past few years.

Most difficult position group to evaluate?

- The toughest position to always evaluate is cornerback. They will either be at quarterback or on offense or playing safety to make more tackles. And a lot of the time, it's tough to see their footwork with the camera angles.

Recruiting success?

- It's take a lot of work to get where we are today, but we can't just sit back and relax. At the same time, a lot of the key components again are building relationships early.

Reid Carrico?

- Friday nights a lot of these guys play, and my staff comes in a cuts up film early Saturday morning, and Reid was one of the guys you were excited to cut up his film. Reid was an old-school linebacker who would throw his body around and make 20 tackles a game, and he would also rip off 80-yard touchdown runs as a running back and dominating games.

No visits?

- I've had a lot of free time without visits. It's given me a great opportunity to help with scouting our opponents.

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