

# Ohio State Football Outlook: The Cornerback Depth Chart



With the Buckeyes' spring game in the rear-view mirror, Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and his staff will enter the summer with a barebones outline for their roster's depth chart in 2022.

Because the program doesn't release an official depth chart, Buckeye Sports Bulletin compiled observations and resources to build its first version of the Ohio State starting offensive, defensive and special teams players. We will also address the second-string and third-string Buckeyes at each position.

Consider this article — and the following articles until May 16 — as you would an NFL mock draft. Ohio State's depth chart will undoubtedly change between May and August. Injuries, the transfer portal, and other factors will cause roster movement. For now, here's BSB's first version of the 2022 depth chart projection based on what we've seen and heard around the Woody Hayes Athletic Center and Ohio Stadium this spring.

## CORNERBACKS

**Starters:** Denzel Burke and Cameron Brown

**Backups:** Jordan Hancock and J.K. Johnson

**Others Available:** Jyaire Brown and Ryan Turner

There aren't many questions for who will start at cornerback for Ohio State this fall. The Buckeyes return both starters from last season in rising sophomore Denzel Burke and fifth-year senior Cameron Brown, which should instill confidence in the coaching staff.

Burke was CB1 as a true freshman and Brown settled in after overcoming his early-season injuries. Ohio State had depth at the position, but Ryan Watts and Lejond Cavazos transferred in the offseason, leaving the Buckeyes with six scholarship players on the roster.

Ohio State head coach Ryan Day and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles told the media that they've been impressed with Jordan Hancock and J.K. Johnson. While Hancock and Johnson might have fallen behind Burke as standouts in the class of 2021, the coaches assured Buckeye fans that the sophomores

will make a significant impact for the Buckeyes this season.

**DENZEL BURKE**

**HEIGHT:** 6-1

**WEIGHT:** 190

**HOMETOWN:** SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ

**RECRUITING:** FOUR-STAR FROM SAGUARO HIGH SCHOOL

After becoming a standout in spring practices and a consistent performer in fall camp, Burke started in all 13 games as a true freshman last season. The Scottsdale, Ariz., native, immediately took over as the Buckeyes' No. 1 cornerback and offered his coaching staff a foundational piece to a pass defense that struggled in 2020.

Despite his youth, Burke displayed incredible discipline and maturity on the outside and frustrated opposing quarterbacks by eliminating their top targets from the action. Last season, Burke's best game came against Purdue's David Bell. The All-Big Ten wide receiver ended up with over 10 receptions and topped 100 yards receiving, but Burke's stellar defense discouraged Bell from catching all his almost 20 targets in the contest.

Burke will return this season as Ohio State's CB1. With all his first season success, it's fair to assume that Burke will only improve as a sophomore. He will have his first opportunity on Sept. 3 against Notre Dame.

**CAMERON BROWN**

**HEIGHT:** 6-0

**WEIGHT:** 190

**HOMETOWN:** ST. LOUIS, MO.

**RECRUITING:** FOUR-STAR FROM CHRISTIAN BROTHERS HIGH SCHOOL

Brown plays with an edge — one Ohio State fans likely saw when the Buckeyes lost to Michigan in 2021. That mentality has brought Brown to where he is today. Although it might hurt more often than it helps, every team needs a player who can reveal their true emotion without fear.

The St. Louis, Mo., native, has missed significant time due to injury during his four-year Buckeye career. Despite his ailments, Brown has been a leader in the locker room and a trusted ally to the coaching staff. The Ohio State defense will need leaders on the field this fall, and Brown can fill that role with ease.

**JORDAN HANCOCK**

**HEIGHT:** 6-1

**WEIGHT:** 188

**HOMETOWN:** SUWANEE, GA.

**RECRUITING:** FOUR-STAR FROM NORTH GWINNETT HIGH SCHOOL

Ohio State's coaching staff has been incredibly high on Hancock this spring. The players also knew of his skill after watching him perform in practice last season. Hancock took a step forward and established himself as a next man up should Burke or Brown need a break from the action.

With a full offseason of experience, Hancock should make the Buckeye cornerback situation feel more like a rotation and less like a two-man routine. He'll need to be ready whenever Day and Knowles call on him. Until then, he'll keep waiting patiently for his turn.

## **J.K. JOHNSON**

**HEIGHT:** 6-0

**WEIGHT:** 179

**HOMETOWN:** ST. LOUIS, MO.

**RECRUITING:** FOUR-STAR FROM DESMET HIGH SCHOOL

Take everything we wrote about Hancock and apply it to Johnson — the two players are growing with the same upward trend at the exact same time. Johnson appeared in one game last season before he fractured his shoulder, meaning he has less experience than his running mate. However, Johnson still seems capable of standing his ground against talented opponents and he invites the challenge whenever that comes. Look for him to start slow and develop into a more significant role later in 2022.

## **OTHERS AVAILABLE**

### *Jyaire Brown and Ryan Turner*

With only six scholarship cornerbacks, Brown and Turner will receive a lot of important work in practice and against Ohio State's lesser opponents. Burke, Brown, Hancock and Johnson take priority as the top four cornerbacks, but Brown and Turner will need to remain focused and keep a next man up mentality.