Ohio State’s Coaches Excited To See Freshmen Cornerbacks Take The Field

Ohio State is welcoming a new pair of cornerbacks to the team, signing Cincinnati Winton Woods four-star Jermaine Mathews (6-0, 175) and Waxahachie, Texas, four-star Calvin Simpson-Hunt (6-0, 175) as members of the 2023 recruiting class.

Their addition is an important one for the Buckeyes, who have an opening at cornerback and have generally struggled with depth at the position over the last few seasons. While neither Mathews nor Simpson-Hunt are expected to immediately complete for the starting job, Ohio State’s coaches have high hopes for the cornerback duo that could push for playing time as true freshmen.

“The number one thing is their competitive nature,” cornerbacks coach Tim Walton said. “Very competitive guys, athletic, have a passion to play. That’s big. When you watch them play you can see it in the tape. They have a really good skill set.

“Jemaine is physical, has a knack for the ball, plays with a high level, is a confident guy,” he continued. “Calvin (has a) good frame, good structure. Calvin is 190 pounds right now. He’s a track guy – 10.6 100-meter – so he has the physical attributes to make an impact. He is more physically ready than some high school guys. They’re really good kids, both of them.”

Simpson-Hunt will arrive on campus this summer, while Mathews has already started winter workouts and acclimating to life at Ohio State. The pair of prospects – both of which finished as top-100 recruits in 2023 and were among the top-five recruits in Ohio State’s class – will both get their time to shine with the Buckeyes, but Mathews is already off to a head start, and defensive coordinator Jim Knowles believes he will bring an energy with him.

“(He’s a) pretty dynamic kid,” Knowles said. “We offered him late, as you consider it now in the procedure, because it was camp last year. And then he just exploded his senior year, so I’m really excited. Let’s face it – when a guy commits, you really don’t know what he’s going to do his senior year,

but he really showed that he’s a playmaker.”

After camping with the Buckeyes and receiving his offer prior to committing in July, Mathews followed it up with an impressive senior season. He finished with 51 tackles (five for loss) with four forced fumbles, four fumble recoveries, 20 pass breakups and six interceptions, of which three were returned for touchdowns.

If that wasn’t impressive enough, he also returned a punt and kickoff for a touchdown en route to being named Ohio Division II Defensive Player of the Year, reaffirming that Ohio State made the right decision in pursuing Mathews and securing him in the class. Now that he’s on campus, the coaches are hoping to see that play transition to the next level.

“I thought he had a great year this year, just playing really, really hard for Winton Woods and Coach (Chad Murphy), and I just was really impressed with his ability to go compete every single day,” Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said in December. “And this is another guy who went through a lot during the recruiting process and fielded a lot of calls. And a lot of people were blowing up that phone. He was loyal to the Buckeyes and I think he’s going to have a great career.”