

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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SCOTT REED/SCOUT.COM

**IN THE FOLD** – The Plains (Ohio) Athens quarterback Joey Burrow (10) gave his verbal commitment in late May to join Ohio State's 2015 recruiting class, giving the Buckeyes their first commit since February. Burrow's verbal gives OSU three for 2015.

## Back In Business

### QB Commitment Breaks Long Cold Recruiting Spell

By BEN AXELROD  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Ohio State football director of player personnel Mark Pantoni took to Twitter on May 27 to deliver a message that Buckeye fans had been waiting more than three months to see.

"BOOOOOOOOMMMMM!" Pantoni posted emphatically.

The message may have been indirect – per NCAA rules, it couldn't have been anything more than that – but its target was clear. Just moments earlier, The Plains (Ohio) Athens class of 2015 quarterback Joey Burrow had taken to the same social media service to announce his intention to spend his college career at Ohio State, and Pantoni could hardly wait to confirm the four-star signal caller's commitment.

If Pantoni's Twitter presence seemed to be lacking in recent months, it was for good reason. It had been since Feb. 11 that the Buckeye recruiting guru had last posted his signature post-commitment tweet, one which followed the since-rescinded pledge of Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian safety Ben Edwards. Fans and analysts alike began to question the direction of Ohio State's 2015 class, which went nearly the entire spring without adding a commitment before Burrow issued his verbal.

"Recruiting has not gone all that well to this point," Scout.com analyst Bill Greene said before Burrow's pledge. "And there's no way any logical person could say otherwise."

In that same span, Big Ten rival Penn State racked up what currently stands as the nation's second-ranked recruiting class with 15 commits, including a pair of highly sought after Buckeye targets in Jersey City (N.J.) St. Peter's Preparatory four-star quarterback Brandon Wimbush and Pittsburgh Baldwin four-star offensive tackle Sterling Jenkins.

Conversely, Ohio State's class sat 47th in the country with just Canton (Ohio) McKinley four-star running back Eric Glover-Williams and Cocoa, Fla., three-star cornerback Jamel Dean committed to the Buckeyes come

Memorial Day. That ranking might have even been somewhat of a facade, as off-the-field issues have left Glover-Williams' future as a Buckeye in question.

The addition of Burrow – the nation's 26th-ranked quarterback – bumped up Ohio State only slightly, giving the Buckeyes the No. 43 class in the country. But in a process that relies so heavily on momentum, Burrow's commitment provided the Buckeyes with just that as they head into a crucial stretch of the 2015 recruiting cycle.

#### Joey Football

Located in the southeastern sector of the state, Ohio University is home to more than 20,000 students and perhaps more notably is rated the nation's seventh-ranked party school by the Princeton Review. But the "Harvard on the Hocking" has been more than just his hometown's primary attraction to Burrow, who grew up in The Plains as the son of Bobcats defensive coordinator and assistant head coach Jimmy Burrow.

Unsurprisingly, Ohio was one of the first schools to offer the 6-4, 210-pound Burrow a scholarship, but as he progressed through his high school career for the Athens Bulldogs, it became unlikely that he'd wind up at a Mid-American Conference school. In 2013, the junior threw for 3,732 yards and 47 touchdowns and rushed for 589 yards one year after throwing for 3,239 yards and 47 scores and rushing for 836 yards.

Those numbers earned Burrow offers from not only Ohio and Ohio State but Central Michigan, Cincinnati, East Carolina, Fresno State, Kentucky, Iowa State, Maryland, Minnesota, South Florida, Toledo, Vanderbilt, Virginia Tech, West Virginia and Western Michigan. But when all was said and done, Burrow decided that an invite from the Buckeyes was too much to pass on and accepted it on the spot.

"It was huge," Burrow said. "It was a big monkey off my back to finally commit, especially to a great school like Ohio State. The opportunity to win multiple national champi-

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## COVER STORY

# Burrow Might Not Be Only 2015 QB Commit

Continued From Page 1

onships is great. My family and I have talked about that over the last couple of weeks and said if they do offer, that's great, I will commit. And if they don't, so be it. But it happened."

While Burrow possesses dual-threat ability, both his numbers and game film indicate a preference to pass over run. He might be more of an Alex Smith-type in the Urban Meyer offense as opposed to the next Braxton Miller, but from his conversations with Ohio State offensive coordinator Tom Herman, it appears that's just what the Buckeyes are looking for.

"They said that they want a guy that can throw first and run second," Burrow said. "That fits my game perfectly. I think I'm going to be very successful there. I think Coach Herman and Coach Meyer both think that I'm going to be very successful there."

Given that it took until late-May for the Buckeyes to extend a scholarship offer, it's easy to infer that Burrow wasn't always Plan A for Meyer and his staff. In fact, he still may not be the top quarterback on Ohio State's board as the Buckeyes continue to pursue five-star Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage signal caller Torrance Gibson and Anaheim (Calif.) Servite four-star quarterback Travis Waller.

But in a class that always had room for two quarterbacks, Burrow has managed to lock up one of those spots. And more than a year before he'll even begin his college career, he's already proving his worth to the Ohio State faithful.

## Top Domino

If Ohio State's excitement over Burrow's

commitment wasn't captured by Pantoni's "BOOOOOOOOMMMMM!" tweet, it could at least be understood from his next one – as well as a previous one.

As Wimbush's recruitment heated up in late-April, Pantoni took to Twitter to post a not-so-cryptic message. Strongly stating Ohio State's need to add a signal caller sooner rather than later, Pantoni let it be known what role Wimbush could play for a class that he has already nicknamed "Elite 15."

"All great recruiting classes must have a QB as the leader to put the class together," Pantoni tweeted.

Wimbush ultimately opted to take his talents elsewhere, but that only fueled the staff's desire to add a quarterback. And once the Buckeyes finally did with Burrow, Pantoni's first post-boom tweet let it be known that the signal caller's role would remain the same.

"A leader has stepped up," Pantoni tweeted. "Let's get it started!"

Along with his not-so-subtle messages, Pantoni posted an even less cryptic picture of a circle of dominos just beginning its inevitable cause-and-effect collapse. The message was obvious; now that a committed Buckeye was back on the board for the first time since December, others should surely follow.

For his part, Burrow is already doing his best to prove Pantoni's hypothesis correct.

Less than an hour after bringing an end to his own recruitment, Burrow was playing the role of recruiter, reaching out to Cincinnati St. Xavier four-star linebacker Justin Hilliard. Once thought to be a lock to land at Notre Dame, the state's No. 1-rated player suddenly has the Buckeyes back at the forefront of his

recruitment, especially after making a visit to Columbus on May 31-June 1.

Landing Hilliard would be a big domino to fall for the Buckeyes, but there are several other highly touted prospects whom Ohio State likes its chances with heading into the summer camp season.

Although spots in this year's class are more limited compared to recent years, the Buckeyes still have a realistic chance at pulling off a top-10 – or even higher – class with the likes of Old Farms (Conn.) Avon five-star tight end Chris Clark, Memphis (Tenn.) University four-star offensive tackle Drew Richmond, Berea (Ky.) Madison Southern four-star running back Damien Harris, Hallandale (Fla.) four-star outside linebacker Sh'mar Kilby-Lane, Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward four-star cornerback Shaun Crawford, Hubbard, Ohio, four-star running back L.J. Scott, Cincinnati Moeller four-star defensive tackle Elijah Taylor, Brentwood (Tenn.) Ravenwood four-star wide receiver Van Jefferson, Cleveland Benedictine four-star linebacker/running back Jerome Baker, Cleveland St. Ignatius four-star defensive end Dre'mont Jones, Warren (Ohio) Harding three-star center James Daniels and Suffield, Conn., four-star defensive tackle Christian Wilkins all still uncommitted.

And then there's the quarterbacks.

## QB Carousel

Despite the excitement surrounding Burrow's commitment, there remains a good chance that he won't be the only quarterback in Ohio State's 2015 class. In fact, it's probably likely that another signal caller will be joining the Elite 15 class.

With Miller leaving after this season and only unproven entities remaining behind him on the Buckeyes roster, the need for quarterbacks in Columbus is high with no clear incumbent sitting behind the reigning two-time Big Ten MVP. Adding depth – or perhaps even an immediate contributor – at the quarterback position in 2015 will likely require adding more than just Burrow, who isn't the blue-chip prospect that Miller or Terrelle Pryor was when they first arrived at Ohio State.

Enter Gibson, the nation's second-rated quarterback who is in the same mold of

Miller and Pryor but is determined to drag his recruitment out to National Signing Day. For a program with such an added emphasis to the quarterback position during this recruiting cycle, the Buckeyes can't afford to gamble until then and potentially be left without a signal caller to sign on the first Wednesday of February.

It's difficult to gauge just where Ohio State stands with Gibson, who included the Buckeyes in his announced top seven May 29. In his latest rankings, Ohio State sat fifth for Gibson behind co-leaders Tennessee and Auburn as well as LSU and Oklahoma but ahead of Miami (Fla.) and Central Florida.

The five-star signal caller would be one of the biggest recruiting gets for Ohio State in recent years and would singlehandedly transform the outlook of the 2015 class. But it will be tough for the Buckeyes to stave off the likes of the SEC schools already ranked ahead of them in the race for Gibson's services, though things could change if the blue-chip prospect takes a trip to Columbus.

In the case of Waller, the situation is a bit murkier as the West Coast signal caller is currently without an Ohio State offer. But the Buckeyes remain interested in Waller, having sent Herman to the Golden State to watch him throw in person.

Whether Ohio State opts to extend a scholarship offer to Waller, the nation's No. 6-rated QB and No. 99 overall prospect, remains to be seen. For his part, Waller is hopeful that an invite does come his way as the Buckeyes – along with Oregon – are at the top of his list of potential suitors.

"There is a possibility that they will take two QBs," Waller said after Burrow committed to Ohio State. "Coach Herman said I'm still high on their board and he's going to let me know when that's official or not. I definitely still have interest and want to visit next month as planned if they want to bring in a second guy."

Much as it did a month ago, the future of the Buckeyes' 2015 class appears unclear, but the group now carries some much-needed momentum. The upcoming camp season should go a long way toward shaping the Elite 15 class as a few more "BOOOOOOOOMMMMM!" posts from Pantoni could be right around the corner.



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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

# Top Talent Flocks To Columbus NFTC

By RYAN GINN

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

The Ohio State football coaching staff was not allowed to go to work on June 1 – at least, not at the Woody Hayes Athletic Center. The outdoor practice fields were taken over by hundreds of high school prospects hoping to be noticed at the Nike Football Training Camp. The best ones came looking for an invitation to The Opening, Nike's prestigious football camp held in Beaverton, Ore., from July 7-10.

For the Buckeyes' staff, it might have felt like cruel irony – with just three commits to show for the class of 2015 through the end of May, Ohio State's coaches couldn't be present while some of the best prospects in the country practiced on their field.

That meant the coaches also weren't around to hear words that would have been music to their ears, as several prospects, including the best player in Ohio, believe that OSU head coach Urban Meyer is in position to land one of the top classes in the country next year.

"They're Ohio State, so they can pick and choose guys who they really want," Cincinnati St. Xavier four-star linebacker Justin Hilliard said. "They take a long process through evaluations, which I wouldn't say can hurt them. They know they can get the best players, and I guess we'll wait out and see."

Look no further than the results of the camp for evidence that the Buckeyes are going after some big fish in this year's class. A total of five players who participated were invited to The Opening – Hilliard, LaGrange (Ohio) Keystone four-star tight end C.J. Conrad, St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall four-star

defensive end Jashon Cornell, Indianapolis Lawrence Central four-star linebacker Darrin Kirkland and Murfreesboro (Tenn.) Oakland three-star linebacker Josh Smith.

Conrad, Kirkland and Hilliard were not been offered by Ohio State, and both Conrad (Kentucky) and Kirkland (Michigan) saw the writing on the wall and committed elsewhere while Ohio State chased higher-ranked players at their respective positions.

For Cornell and Hilliard, both of whom hold offers, Ohio State is very much in contention to land the duo. Cornell hinted as much afterward, telling BSB that there's definitely a chance he and Hilliard could land at the same school.

What would Ohio State be getting if it were to land some of the players who starred at the Columbus NFTC? The complete list of MVPs, listed by position, and non-MVP Opening invitees, listed alphabetically, is as follows.

**Quarterback:** Ben Hicks, Waco (Texas) Midway. Hicks, a three-star quarterback and the No. 50 player at his position according to Scout, committed to Houston on May 2. He made sure the long trip to Columbus wasn't wasted and took home MVP honors over a list of players that included Ohio State commit Joey Burrow. Hicks is well-versed in recruiting camps, having competed at multiple NFTC and Elite 11 camp locations. He demonstrated that in Columbus, showing off an accurate arm and good touch.

**Running back:** Andrew Dowell, Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward. Dowell is a four-star run-

ning back and the No. 28-rated player at his position. He and his twin brother, David, both committed to Northwestern on April 13, and he did not hold an offer from Ohio State. That's no mark against him, though, as Dowell showed at the NFTC camp that Pat Fitzgerald reeled in a gem by securing his pledge. The class of 2015 ball carrier moved very well for his size and also showed off his hands with some catches.



Justin Hilliard

## Wide receiver/tight end:

Conrad. For the first time in this year's NFTC circuit, the dual-position award went to a tight end. That fact wasn't lost on Conrad, a four-star prospect who committed to Kentucky on May 9 after it became apparent that Ohio State had other options in mind at the position.

"It means a lot because some of those receivers are so fast," Conrad said. "They're faster than me and quicker than me, but I kind of used my strength and my body to get myself open, and that's kind of how I used that to win this award."

Conrad definitely has a good command of his size when it comes to battling defensive backs for passes, and his numerous successes secured him an invitation to The Opening. That honor has been a rare one for Kentucky players in years past, although Wildcats freshman quarterback Drew Barker punched his ticket to the 2013 edition of The Opening at the Columbus NFTC.

"This is the biggest honor I've ever had in my life besides my commitment to Kentucky," Conrad said. "I just came out here and tried to compete."

**Offensive line:** Michael Onwenu, Detroit Cass Tech. Not only is Onwenu a member of the class of 2016, making him the youngest position MVP, but he is also being recruited primarily as a defensive tackle. That didn't stop him from having an effective day on the offensive side of the trenches, and he won his share of one-on-one battles. His first and only offer thus far has come from Ohio State, but Onwenu is also receiving serious interest from Michigan and Michigan State.

**Defensive line:** Cornell. A four-star defensive end, Cornell attributed much of his success as well as his invitation to The Opening to his work ethic. He was a participant at the Chicago NFTC on April 12 but didn't perform up to his expectations. With a trip to Oregon still in mind, Cornell told BSB that he worked every day to get better. That effort paid off, as he shone in one-on-one battles and took home MVP honors at a talent-filled position group.

He visited Ohio State on May 31 as well, and the Buckeyes are very much in play for his services.

**Linebacker:** Kirkland. A four-star linebacker, Kirkland likely benefited from the early exit of another linebacker and Opening invitee in Hilliard when it came to earning an MVP spot. Still, the play of the Michigan commit was nothing to dismiss, as he moved impressively through drills.

"My mind-set was that this was a business trip," Kirkland told BSB. "I'm very excited to represent Michigan. We are in Ohio, so it was definitely fun. But I was also excited to represent my city and my school, so that was a great opportunity for me."

**Defensive back:** Tyson Smith, Orchard Lake (Mich.) St. Mary's. Smith, a four-star cornerback, committed to Michigan State on Dec. 4. He didn't have an Ohio State offer. Smith appears to be another great find in the defensive secondary for Michigan State, as he came up with a number of interceptions during a generally impressive day.

**Non-MVP Opening invitees:** Hilliard, Cincinnati St. Xavier. He is the fourth-ranked outside linebacker and No. 41 overall prospect nationally. Although he had to leave camp early, Hilliard still departed with an invitation to The Opening. Surrounded by a throng of reporters before camp even began, Hilliard showed why he was the Buckeye State's top prospect with an impressive showing at the camp in a limited amount of time. He is expected to decide between Ohio State and Notre Dame sometime before August.

Josh Smith. He was perhaps the most surprising of the five Opening invitees and the only three-star to be chosen for the honor. With that being said, he held his own at the camp and showed why his offer list includes a handful of SEC schools. When asked to name some of his top schools he produced the eclectic list of Alabama, Auburn, Penn State, Purdue and Vanderbilt. Of course, that list could always change if his spot in The Opening leads to more offers.

"It's a great honor," Smith told BSB. "Ever since freshman year I knew about The Opening and that was one of my goals, and today that blessing came true."

## Harris Sits Out After Surgery

One of the main attractions when the NFTC roster was released was Berea (Ky.) Madison Southern four-star prospect Damien Harris, the No. 1 running back nationally. Unfortunately, Harris was unable to participate after undergoing minor surgery on his elbow.

The fact that he still made the effort to come to Columbus with no chance of playing



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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

seemed to indicate an offer to The Opening was on tap, but the presentations came and went without an invitation to Harris. That doesn't mean he won't be awarded a spot later, though, as several of the camp invitations have been issued through the event's official Twitter account.

"I'll be able to work out again within a week or two," Harris told BSB. "The plan is obviously to go to The Opening and have a good showing there and just visit some schools and keep in touch with some of these schools. Hopefully I develop a lot of relationships with a lot of coaches and a lot of schools and see where it takes me."

The star ball carrier and one-time Michigan commit noted that Ohio State had stopped by several times over the past couple of months. The state of Kentucky allows spring football, so the OSU staff was able to see him play in person this spring, unlike the case with Ohio prospects.

Ohio State is making it very clear that it wants Harris in Columbus, as Meyer, running backs coach Stan Drayton and tight ends coach Tim Hinton have joined in the effort to recruit him.

"Really, Coach Hinton, Coach Meyer and Coach Drayton are all recruiting me," Harris said. "I'm talking to all those guys all the time and just getting to know them better each and every day. They're always hitting me up, and I always talk to them. I'm building these great relationships with them and getting to know them better."

One element of concern is whether he would prefer to be the sole recruit in the backfield in the class or not, as the Buckeyes are also in on Hubbard, Ohio, four-star running back L.J. Scott and Detroit Cass Tech four-star running back Mike Weber.

As many great players do, Harris expressed no concerns about the possibility of Ohio State taking more than one back. With a decision that he projects to come in either early January or on National Signing Day, Harris said that his opinion of Ohio State won't change if the Buckeyes secure a running back pledge before he commits.

"That wouldn't affect me at all," he said. "I don't mind playing with another back. It has its advantages. It's less of a beating on you as a back, and you get to share some reps with another great player. But at the same time, I would like to play in a one-back (situation). Either way, it doesn't bother me. I couldn't care less either way."

Harris has plans to release a top eight in the near future, and it would be surprising if the Buckeyes didn't make the cut. The list won't be in order and will mainly serve as a way to cut down on his recruitment by doing away with schools that don't realistically have a shot with him. Still, with a boatload of offers, the race for his services is wide open at this point.

"I don't really have any top schools," he said. "I'm open to everything right now. I'm just kind of sitting back and keeping my options open. I'm going to make a top list here soon, so that's how things are. I don't really have a top school as of now."

## Two Standing Out To Hilliard

Ohio's most coveted player has also proved to be one of the most difficult for Ohio State to reel in. Long thought to be a risk to go out of state, Hilliard has been trending more toward Ohio State in recent weeks. The standout linebacker said that he has plans to announce his decision sometime in either late June or July and admitted that two schools in particular are standing out to him.

While he played coy and refused to name the pair of top schools, it is widely believed that the battle for Hilliard will come down to Notre Dame and Ohio State. The Irish have been considered the leaders for some time now, but Ohio State appears to either have significantly closed the gap or even taken the lead as his recruitment comes down the stretch.

He's made the short drive to Columbus from Cincinnati quite a few times, and those trips have allowed him to learn everything there is to know about what he'd be getting into with a commitment to Ohio State.

"I basically know everything," he said. "I even know some of the professors."

Don't expect a commitment on the heels of any of his visits to any schools, though. One thing Hilliard noted is that he always gives himself a few days to process the visit so that he doesn't make an emotional decision about such an important thing.

Once that choice comes, though, there's no going back for him.

"When I make a decision, I want to be 100 percent sure because I don't want to decommit," he said. "It's pretty structured now because I narrowed it down from a top 15 to a top 10 to a top five. So, hopefully, I keep visiting all these schools and then hopefully decide in late June to the end of July."

While many highly touted players prefer to wait until sometime in the final month before National Signing Day, Hilliard has made up his mind that he wants to have his recruitment wrapped up before his senior year begins. That wasn't necessarily always the case, but one factor in particular led to the current timetable.

"Also, a big thing is recruiting other players to come to the school of my choice," he said. "That was probably the biggest factor in that."

If his choice is indeed Ohio State, it could be one of the first dominoes on the road to yet another top-five recruiting class for Meyer.

## Fullwood Set To Decide

Olney (Md.) Good Counsel three-star defensive end Darius Fullwood didn't leave Columbus with the invitation to The Opening that he sought, but he'll be back in Columbus to assess an invitation of another kind in June.

Fullwood has Ohio State in his top five along with Georgia Tech, Kentucky, Miami and Virginia Tech. He has set a decision date for June 28, but the June 1 NFTC camp won't be his last trip to Ohio State before he decides. The Maryland native will be back for a one-day camp June 19.

After the addition of defensive line coach Larry Johnson Sr. led to a signed national letter of intent from Darius Slade on National Signing Day, it appears that another Johnson

connection from his Penn State days could bear fruit for his new employer. Fullwood cited the chance to work with Johnson as one of the biggest reasons for his decision to camp at Ohio State.

"I think it will be good to come up on June 19 just to camp with Coach Johnson and have him teach me," Fullwood said. "I camped with him when he was at Penn State, too. It'll just be good to get a chance to be coached by him again. He's one of the elite defensive line coaches out here, so I think that will be a fun time."

The NFTC trip gave Fullwood a chance to take an unofficial visit to Ohio State on May 31, and he walked away impressed with what he saw from the Buckeyes.

"Ohio State has a great tradition," he said. "They're known for winning a lot of big games, playing in a lot of big games. It's just something that you think every kid getting recruited, it's something they would want to do – play for a great tradition at a great school. It just seems like a great fit. Great campus, great atmosphere, so I think those are the main things."

## OSU Chasing Weber Hard

Weber showed his toughness at the NFTC event by competing with a sprained thumb for as long as he could. Relaxing afterward with a massive bag of ice on his right hand, he explained where he stands with Ohio State as one-third of the Buckeyes' main recruiting pool at running back.

While Cass Tech is known as a Michigan pipeline, Ohio State made its presence felt in the class of 2014 by snatching up corner-back Damon Webb, who earned an Opening invitation at the Columbus NFTC in 2013. Cornerbacks coach Kerry Coombs is OSU's primary recruiter in Michigan, but OSU has also been sending Drayton up north to attempt to bring Weber into the fold.

"Ohio State is really on it right now," said Weber, who sported an Ohio State wristband at the event. "They make sure to contact me every day. They're showing the most interest to me right now."

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

# Burrow Gives Ohio State Third 2015 Commit

Last June, a scholarship offer from Ohio State seemed admittedly unlikely for The Plains (Ohio) Athens quarterback Joey Burrow. But despite a shaky showing in front of the Buckeye coaching staff at a Columbus camp last summer, the four-star signal caller finds himself as the newest member of Ohio State's 2015 class after accepting an invite to play for the Buckeyes on May 27.

## RECRUITING OUTLOOK Ben Axelrod

"I went to camp last year," Burrow told Scout.com, the parent network of BuckeyeSports.com. "I was OK back then, I wasn't great. I improved so much over my junior year that (OSU offensive coordinator Tom) Herman watched the last two games of my junior season. He thought I was a pretty good player – he wasn't expecting much. He just came to watch and I showed out while he was there."

Despite Burrow's impressive performance in front of the Buckeye quarterbacks coach, it still took some time for him to earn his scholarship offer to play for Ohio State. But Herman stayed in contact with the 6-4, 210-pounder, ultimately leading to an on-the-spot commitment from the class of 2015's 26th-ranked quarterback.

"I had been waiting for about a month. (Herman) kept saying that I was his guy," Burrow recalled. "And then finally today, it happened."

A dual-threat prospect, Burrow sees himself as a passer first and a runner second. In his junior season at Athens, the son of Ohio University defensive coordinator Jimmy Burrow threw for 3,732 yards and 47 TDs and added 589 more yards on the ground.

After the decommitment of Jacksonville (Fla.) Trinity Christian three-star safety and now-Auburn commit Ben Edwards, Burrow becomes the third member of Ohio State's 2015 class, which ranked 43rd in the country after Burrow's commitment. The Buckeyes will likely look to add another quarterback to their upcoming class in addition to Burrow, but that's just fine with the QB, who is more

than happy to know that he'll be spending his college career in Columbus.

"If they did (bring in two quarterbacks) that really wouldn't worry me. I'm confident in my abilities to beat anybody out," Burrow said. "I think I'm the best quarterback in the country, and you have to think that if you're going to be successful at the next level."

Burrow opted to become a Buckeye over the likes of Central Michigan, Cincinnati, East Carolina, Fresno State, Iowa State, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Ohio, South Florida, Toledo, Vanderbilt, Virginia Tech, West Virginia and Western Michigan.

### Fla. QB Gibson Names Top Seven Schools

Of the other 2015 quarterbacks Ohio State is looking to attract, there is not a bigger fish in the Buckeyes' pond than Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage quarterback Torrance Gibson. The five-star prospect is one of the most sought-after players in the country, ranking as the nation's 14th overall player and second-ranked quarterback.

Thanks in large part to Urban Meyer and Ohio State's spread offense, the Buckeyes have been in the hunt for Gibson since the beginning, but if his latest list is any indication, OSU still has some work to do with the 6-4, 207-pounder.

Dropping the Buckeyes one spot from the last time he released a list, Gibson named Ohio State fifth in his most recent update behind co-leaders Tennessee and Auburn as well as LSU and Oklahoma. The Buckeyes sit ahead of Miami (Fla.) and UCF.

Given who the Buckeyes have ahead of them, landing Gibson won't be an easy task, although it's worth noting that he has yet to come to Columbus for a visit – something that he has strongly stated a desire to do. Most recently, the Sunshine State star was at Auburn for a visit, which he described as perfect.

"It helped a lot," Gibson said of the trip. "I like a coach that's not all about football, just about having fun and enjoying life. The offense is perfect for me. Everyone thinks I would fit right in with this offense. It was just good."

Though he admitted that he came close to committing to Auburn during the trip, Gibson remains on the market for the time being. Originally, he had planned on not announcing

## OSU Football Verbal Commitments

Players in the class of 2015 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Joey Burrow	QB	6-4	210	★★★★	The Plains (Ohio) Athens
Jamel Dean	CB	6-1	194	★★★★	Cocoa, Fla.
Eric Glover-Williams	RB	5-10	175	★★★★	Canton (Ohio) McKinley

Players in the class of 2017 who have issued verbal commitments to play football at Ohio State.

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Stars	High School
Danny Clark	QB	6-4	205	NR	Massillon (Ohio) Washington

his college destination until National Signing Day, but he is now considering moving up his decision date, placing an increased emphasis on the Buckeyes' need to get him to campus for a visit sooner rather than later.

### Top Ohio RB Scott Visits Ohio State Again

After slow-playing its hand with a relatively late scholarship offer, Ohio State's involvement with Hubbard, Ohio, four-star running back L.J. Scott appeared to be a lost cause. But even after the 6-1, 227-pounder recently named Michigan State the leader in the race for his services, he opted to take a May 31 trip to Columbus, where Meyer and his staff managed to gain ground on the Spartans.

"The visit to Ohio State was really nice, and I really enjoyed being there," Scott stated. "I think it gets better every time I go there, and I know I'm going to have a tough decision someday. We hung out with the coaches, and they all treated me great."

The class of 2015's eighth-ranked running back and the No. 1 rusher in the state of Ohio, Scott is now primarily being recruited by new Buckeyes defensive coordinator Chris Ash. But during his time on campus, he also got to spend some time with Meyer, who made it clear just how badly the Buckeyes want to land the nation's No. 88 overall prospect.

"Coach Meyer and I spoke today and he pulled me away from everyone so we could talk," Scott said. "He told me he's proud of the work I'm doing in the classroom, and he wants me to be a Buckeye. He let me know how much he wants me, and he made me feel wanted. He kind of singled me out in front of the other recruits in a good way, and that made me kind of nervous, but I know he's a good man."

In addition to Ohio State and Michigan State, Scott holds offers from some of the nation's top programs, including Alabama, Auburn, Cincinnati, Kentucky, Michigan, Tennessee and West Virginia. Despite the positive impression that the Buckeyes made on him during his most recent visit, the Spartans remain the front-runners for the Buckeye State prospect.

"I would say Michigan State is still No. 1 for me, but today kind of changed things for me,"

Scott admitted. "It's a tough decision for me for sure, and I have a lot to think about going forward."

And while Scott stated a desire to go back to East Lansing for another visit soon, don't count the Buckeyes out just yet.

"I want to visit Michigan State once again for sure," he said. "And I also might come back to Ohio State next month."

### Nation's Top Tight End Clark Eyes OSU Visit

After one of the more noteworthy recruitments in the 2015 class, Avon (Conn.) Old Farms five-star tight end Chris Clark will announce where he'll be spending his college career in July at Nike's "The Opening" camp.

But first, the nation's top-ranked tight end will make five more visits, and the Buckeyes will get one last chance to make an impression on the 6-6, 247-pounder.

Clark was at Tennessee on June 2 before heading to North Carolina – where he was once committed – on June 4. Clark also plans on taking a June 10 trip to Arizona State before heading to Ohio State for a two-day trip June 16-17. Clark will round out his final tour with stops at Michigan State (June 18) and Michigan (June 19).

"Excited to say the remaining visits I have planned will be the last ones I take before I commit at The Opening in the July," Clark posted to his Twitter account.

With Clark going through one of the more unpredictable recruitments in recent memory, Ohio State will soon see where it stands once and for all with the nation's 26th-ranked prospect. In his junior season, Clark caught 39 balls for 417 yards and six touchdowns.

The Opening runs July 7-10 in Beaverton, Ore.

The Buckeyes' desire to add Clark to their upcoming class likely only increased with the news that fellow tight end target Hale Hentges of Jefferson City (Mo.) Helias has committed to Alabama. The 6-4, 230-pound four-star prospect chose the Crimson Tide over Ohio State, Auburn, Florida State, Michigan and Missouri.

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

in Burrow and 2017 in Massillon (Ohio) Washington's Danny Clark, Ohio State is also looking to ramp up its efforts when it comes to signal callers in the 2016 class.

While the Buckeyes have yet to extend him a scholarship offer, they hosted Trotwood (Ohio) Madison quarterback Messiah deWeaver for a visit on the Ohio State campus May 31.

"Things went really well at Ohio State, and I know Coach Meyer really likes me a lot," deWeaver said. "He said he's heard nothing but great things about me, and he loved my size. Coach Herman said he loves my film, and now he wants to see me throw in person."

At 6-3 and 200 pounds, deWeaver is regarded as one of the top prospects in Ohio in the 2016 class. Having been a starter at Trotwood-Madison since his freshman year, deWeaver already holds scholarship offers from Kentucky, Louisville and Toledo.

But like most kids in the Buckeye State, deWeaver holds Ohio State near and dear to his heart. The interest appears to be mutual, as the Buckeyes have made an increased effort with deWeaver in recent weeks.

"We've been talking the past few weeks, and it started after they came to my school about three weeks ago," deWeaver said. "They told me to stay in touch with them, and I've been talking with (tight ends coach Tim) Hinton the past few weeks."

Having spent time at Ohio State for the Nike Football Training Camp and Elite 11 quarterbacks competition held June 1-2, deWeaver has been afforded an extended look at the Buckeyes' facilities in recent weeks. He also hopes to develop a relationship with Herman, who would likely play a central role in his recruitment should it continue to gain steam in Columbus.

"I definitely have interest in Ohio State, and I've grown up in Ohio, so I want to learn

even more about them," deWeaver said. "I really want to get to know Coach Herman a lot better going forward, so we have to see how things go."

### Star Va. LB DeBerry Recaps OSU Visit

Having received nearly 60 scholarship offers, Richmond (Va.) St. Christopher's School five-star linebacker Ricky DeBerry has cut his list of potential suitors by a third.

The nation's second-ranked outside linebacker in the 2015 class is still considering Ohio State in that group, and DeBerry recently took his talents to Columbus for a visit in an effort to get a better look at the Buckeyes.

"Oh, man, Ohio State is great," DeBerry said. "I really love the atmosphere there and the coaching staff. I love the way the coaching staff does things."

In particular, the 6-2, 240-pound LB is a fan of new Ohio State defensive line coach Larry Johnson, who has a reputation of being a superb recruiter in the Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia areas. DeBerry has been in contact with Johnson since the coach was at Penn State, and his addition to the OSU staff has only helped the Buckeyes' chances in the race for his services.

"Coach Johnson was at Penn State and I have a great relationship with him, so it was great to see him," DeBerry said. "And Urban Meyer has won everywhere he's been."

In addition to Ohio State, the nation's No. 24 overall prospect is also still considering offers from Alabama, Arizona State, Auburn, Clemson, Florida, LSU, Miami (Fla.), Michigan State, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Ole Miss, Tennessee, Texas A&M, South Carolina, USC, UCLA, Virginia and Virginia Tech. Recently, he stated that he plans on trimming his list to eight by the end of August,

knowing that Virginia, North Carolina and Virginia Tech will make that cut.

"Those three are close to home," DeBerry explained. "I don't have to take official visits to those schools because I can just get in my car and drive to those places and come back in the same day. I definitely like those schools and can see myself at them."

So while the Buckeyes appear to have made a positive impression on the highly sought after linebacker, it's clear that they'll have to fend off some schools who already hold a hometown advantage – as well as Alabama, where DeBerry plans on visiting this summer. Right now it remains likely that the five-star prospect's recruitment will play out all the way until signing day.

### Buckeyes Have Edge With Younger Bosa

As a 2016 prospect, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas defensive end Nicholas Bosa still has a long way to go until he can sign with a school. But with his older brother Joey already on its roster, Ohio State has jumped out to an early lead in the recruitment of the four-star prospect thanks to his early exposure to the Buckeyes' program.

"Right now, obviously Ohio State stands out because I get to see them a lot and get to talk to the coaches a lot because of my brother," the younger Bosa said. "When September comes, all the coaches are going to be able to call me, so then I'll really be able to talk to everybody and get to know the people."

Joey's early success has only helped Ohio State's reputation with the Bosa family as the Buckeye defensive end was named a freshman All-American after a stellar 2013 campaign. That hasn't been lost on Nicholas, who already measures in at 6-3 and 250 pounds.

"He definitely loves it," Nicholas said of Joey's experiences at Ohio State. "He's explained to me what makes a college a place to go, the things that really don't matter, like facilities, stuff like that. He tells me what I should really look for in the recruiting process. He loves Ohio State. It's definitely a good place."

While Bosa has already admitted that Ohio State is the early favorite in his recruitment, he also has his eye on a trio of in-state schools. The Sunshine State prospect said that he hopes to visit Florida State, Florida and Miami before

Continued On Page 14

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## OHIO STATE FOOTBALL RECRUITING

## Meyer, Staff Already Working On Future Classes

Continued From Page 13

making his decision. And even though he's only at the halfway point of his high school career, the younger Bosa knows what he's looking for in a suitor. Just like Mike Vrabel played a crucial role in bringing his brother to Columbus, Nicholas hopes to develop a relationship with his future position coach before he ever steps foot on campus for his first day of school.

"Relationships with the D-line coach, and I want to sit down and watch film with the D-line coach and really get to know him," Bosa said when asked what he'll be looking for in a potential destination. "And the people, the campus, all that stuff."

In addition to Ohio State, Bosa already holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Clemson, Florida, Florida State, Illinois, Miami, Michigan State and Notre Dame.

### Buckeyes Getting Aggressive With Future Recruits

The 2015 class got off to a slow start in terms of commitments for Ohio State, but Meyer and his staff are trying to make sure the same thing doesn't happen in future classes.

The Buckeyes have been aggressive with early offers, including one that is out to Scott's Hubbard backfield mate, running back George Hill. The 6-0, 190-pound prospect has been to Ohio State a number of times already but is not yet ready to break the ice and pledge his services to the Buckeyes.

"Coach Meyer and I spoke on the phone again (May 22) and he's trying to get me to be one of the leaders for my recruiting class," he said. "He tried to get me to commit, but I'm not ready for that right now."

"I won't be committing when I go back in a few weeks, but Ohio State is way up there for me. In looking at things, there's no rush for me to commit right now."

Indiana, Michigan State and West Virginia are among those to also offer Hill.

Another 2016 prospect who was at Ohio State recently is Brendan Ferns. Already a four-star prospect, the 6-3, 225-pound Ferns was on campus along with a number of invited guests May 31 and donned an Ohio State jersey in a photo with Meyer and Ash that he posted on Twitter.

### A Look Back At Recruiting From The Pages Of BSB

#### 25 Years Ago – 1989

Two of head coach John Cooper's 1989 football signees achieved passing grades to achieve freshman eligibility while another continued to try.

Still another player learned he would not make the cut, but not because of a poor standardized test score. The problem for Chuck Jones of Chillicothe, Ohio, was a failed government class that left him one-half credit short of being able to graduate from high school.

"I messed up," said the USA Today All-America defensive tackle. "It's nobody's fault but mine."

Better news came for defensive back Chico Nelson of Sarasota, Fla., and linebacker Alonzo Spellman of Mount Holly, N.J., both of whom were able to attain passing test scores.

That left highly rated linebacker Tyrone Morrison of San Diego the only member of the class whose fate was yet to be determined. He retook the SAT in early June and awaited his score as BSB went to press.

#### 20 Years Ago – 1994

Although he received plenty of interest as a high school junior, Wichita (Kan.) North offensive guard Jamie Sumner had a poor senior season that resulted in no scholarship offers from Division I programs. His subpar showing led him to enroll at Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College, one of the best JUCO programs in the country.

After helping Coffeyville to a 9-2 record and No. 6 ranking in 1993, the 6-4, 300-pound prospect held dozens of offers, but one in particular stood out to him before his commitment to join OSU's class of 1994.

"I had between 35 and 40 schools offer me scholarships, but an offer like Ohio State only comes along once in a while," he said. "I had to take the opportunity Ohio State gave me. I'd have been a fool to not take the opportunity."

A native of St. Clairsville, Ohio, Ferns is the brother of 2015 Michigan linebacker commit Michael Ferns, but that doesn't seem to be dulling his enthusiasm for Ohio State. He also has offers from Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia and is hearing from Penn State and Northwestern.

Another 2016 running back with an Ohio State offer is Southfield, Mich., prospect Matt

#### 15 Years Ago – 1999

On the penultimate weekend of May, Ohio State played host to an unofficial visit from one of the nation's top quarterbacks in the class of 2000.

Jeff Smoker of Manheim (Pa.) Central said he stayed with a relative in nearby Plain City before touring the OSU campus.

"I talked with Coach Cooper for probably half an hour, and I spent a lot of time with (quarterbacks coach Tim) Salem. He really knows his stuff and seems like a smart coach," Smoker said.

The 6-4, 195-pounder already boasted scholarship offers from Ohio State and Michigan and was looking at North Carolina, Kentucky and Michigan State.

"(Ohio State) said if I committed there they would only take one quarterback this year and they wouldn't go after anybody else," Smoker said. "That made me feel pretty good."

#### 10 Years Ago – 2004

A pair of defensive linemen gave verbal commitments to be Buckeyes in the span of five days in late May and early June.

First came the May 27 commitment of Ryan Williams, a 6-5, 240-pound prospect from Mission Viejo, Calif., with roots in Ohio.

"I've always wanted to be a Buckeye," said the Washington Court House native who moved out west at a very early age. "Ever since I was born, it was the team I wanted to play for."

He figured to have to battle a lifelong Buckeye State resident for playing time after Troy native Todd Denlinger committed June 2.

"It's always been in the back of my head that that's where I want to go," said the 6-3, 280-pound Denlinger. "It's always been my dream."

#### Five Years Ago – 2009

Ohio State had its eyes on continuing the notable Cleveland Glenville pipeline when it

offered four-star cornerback Christian Bryant. The OSU scholarship offer was his 21st overall but definitely stood out.

"It's pretty good, just knowing the pipeline of going to Ohio State is really good," Bryant said. "I've talked to past players from Glenville, and they said the experience at Ohio State is a great experience. I'm still really going to keep my options open and go through the whole process to see what really fits me at a college."

Listed at 5-10, 175 pounds, Bryant was rated the No. 12 cornerback in the country. Although he noted that he was willing to move to safety, his preference was to play cornerback in college.

Still, Tarblooders coach Ted Ginn Sr. said watching Bryant play reminded him of a former Cleveland Glenville star who went on to play safety at Ohio State, comparing him to Donte Whitner.

#### One Year Ago – 2013

Manassas (Va.) Stonewall defensive tackle Tim Settle named Ohio State his favorite school in February 2013, and just a few months later he was back in Columbus with an offer and even more praise.

Although he was a rising junior, Settle took part in the Nike Football Training Camp held in Columbus. The Buckeyes' facilities and campus made an impression on the 6-2, 295-pound prospect, who held offers from Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia Tech and Wisconsin in addition to Ohio State.

"Ohio State was great and I loved it," Settle said. "The campus is huge. The facilities were huge. It's really nice there. It's organized. You can tell from experience and the path that they are a very successful program."

"I just like the environment at Ohio State in general. I wasn't even thinking football when I came here. It's just how everything is right now. If you look around, you can just tell it's beautiful here."

oriented. They don't just look at you for football, they look at you for academics as well. They focus on academics and that's what I excel in. What I saw and heard from the coaches was great. I loved it."

Ohio State is clearly targeting the running back position in '16 because another offer out has gone to North Ridgeville, Ohio, rusher Demario McCall. The speedy 5-11, 170-pound prospect ran for 25 touchdowns last year and figures to be one of the top prospects in the state in his class.

McCall has also been offered by Pittsburgh but says his favorite school is Oregon. However, he's still happy to have scholarships from the Panthers and Buckeyes in the hopper.

"Things are going great for me and I have offers from Pittsburgh and Ohio State," McCall stated. "Pittsburgh came last week and they were in my school to see me. I do like them and I want to get to one of their camps this summer."

"The Ohio State offer was great and I have spoken with Urban Meyer. Getting the offer meant a lot to me, and I couldn't stop smiling when I was talking to Coach Meyer. It was my first offer and it felt great."

Looking even further into the future, OSU offered 2017 linebacker Josh Ross of Orchard Lake (Mich.) St. Mary's in May. The brother of Michigan linebacker James Ross, the younger Ross already has offers from U-M, Michigan State and Oklahoma.

And in a sign of just how advanced the recruiting world is moving these days, Ohio State hosted 2018 running back Ricky Slade of Woodbridge (Va.) C.D. Hylton on May 31. Slade does not have any offers yet but already checks in at 5-9, 170 pounds.

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# Dublin Scioto Standout Trying to Earn OSU Offer

By RYAN GINN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

Longtime Dublin (Ohio) Scioto football coach Karl Johnson vividly remembers what is perhaps the most impressive moment of rising senior Nick Conner's playing career for the Irish.

In a game against Westerville South in 2013, the Irish blocked a field goal to send the game into overtime. From there, Conner took over. Dublin Scioto had the first possession of overtime and Conner hammered the opposing defense with each carry, eventually scoring on a 2-yard run. Switching to defense, he played hero once again by picking off a pass to end the game.

"That's a moment that I'll remember," Johnson told BSB. "He's a guy who was playing both sides of the ball, and he came through for us."

Playing both ways is commonplace in high school football, but few prep players possess the intensity and selflessness of Conner, who Johnson said will do whatever it takes to win.

"If I came to him and told him we needed him to play left tackle, he'd go play left tackle to the best of his ability," Johnson said. "It's just the way he is. He's not condescending, but he has high expectations for his teammates. He sets an example for how things need to be done."

Luckily for Conner, his success at his current positions should prevent any left tackle duties in the near future. Conner is currently ranked the No. 9 outside linebacker in the country, and Scout.com also ranks him the No. 87 overall prospect in the country regardless of position. While Conner is known for his linebacking prowess, a two-word description keeps coming up when people talk about Conner and his abilities.

"He's a football player," Johnson said. "He's got the size, he's got the speed, he's got the length and athleticism ... but at the end of the day he's a football player. He's tough and physical and he's a competitor. All he cares about is winning and playing his best. If you're a high school coach or college coach, he's the kind of kid you want to coach."

Thus far, plenty of college coaches have used a scholarship offer to let him know that fact. The count is growing near 20 and some of the most recent schools to extend a scholarship offer are Duke, Oregon, Minnesota, Vanderbilt and Virginia Tech. He's garnered plenty of attention in the Big Ten as Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Purdue have all joined the Golden Gophers in offering, and he holds a second SEC offer from Kentucky.

When listing the schools he's most interested in, though, just two of those schools – Oregon and Kentucky – made the cut. The other four such places – Michigan State, Stanford and USC in addition to Ohio State – have demonstrated interest but have yet to formally offer Conner a scholarship.

Conner is a strong prospect, which goes without saying when looking at how highly he ranks on the national scale. In many years, especially with his proximity to Columbus, he could very well be holding an Ohio State offer by this point.

But this is not most years. In the 2014 class, Ohio State scooped up four top-shelf linebackers by signing the Nos. 2, 3 and 4 outside linebackers and the No. 5 middle linebacker in the country.

In 2015, the two most highly rated prospects in the state of Ohio – Justin Hilliard of Cincinnati St. Xavier and Jerome Baker of Cleveland Benedictine – also happen to play linebacker. Sh'mar Kilby-Lane of Hallandale, Fla., is another top Buckeye target and, you guessed it, plays linebacker.

"I don't know how I feel about that," Conner told BSB in regard to OSU's four-man haul in 2014 and extensive offer list for the class of 2015.

It would seem that Ohio State is currently set on a smaller class, which could push Conner either out west or to a Big Ten rival such as Michigan State.

"With all the linebackers on the roster, especially after bringing in four this year, I think they'd like to get by with two this year," Scout.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene said. "I think they would take three if the right three fell to them, but I think they're at a point right now where taking four linebackers is probably not going to be the strategy going forward. I think he's in a tough spot in terms of an Ohio State offer."

It may take some in-state misses for Conner to end up in scarlet and gray, but that doesn't mean that he won't be trying to get that elusive scholarship offer. Noting that he doesn't have anything else going on at that time, he's agreed to camp at Ohio State in June in the hopes of impressing the Ohio State coaching staff. It's the same route taken by plenty of other local prospects who don't have the opportunity to play spring football and receive earlier evaluations.

Conner was once thought to be an automatic commit if an offer ever came, but it certainly appears possible that the waiting game may have taken its toll on the four-star prospect. When asked what a scholarship offer from Ohio State would mean to him, Conner first mentioned that others would be more excited about it.

"All my friends and family would be so happy," he said. "I really don't know if I could accept it right away just because of all the linebackers they have. I'd have to see how things play out this summer and get to know a little bit more."

His situation might be most comparable to that of Columbus Bishop Ready offensive

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## Get To Know: Nick Conner

**High School** – Dublin (Ohio) Scioto

**Position** – Outside Linebacker

**Height, Weight** – 6-3, 215 pounds

**Rankings** – Scout.com rates Conner a four-star prospect, the No. 9 outside linebacker and No. 87 overall prospect in the 2015 class.

**Player Evaluation** – "He's got a college-ready body right now. He's a big, physical, strong kid. He looks like a college football player right now. He'll either play the middle or the strong side, and he's a heck of a football player, there's no doubt about it."

– Scout.com recruiting analyst Bill Greene

**Strengths** – "When you look at his strengths, it would be his size, his motor and his physical play. He's a tough kid, and he'll hit you." – Greene

**Weaknesses** – "He's not the most fluid, agile, quick-twitch type of linebacker. He's not a Ryan Shazier-type. He's not the fastest guy in the world and may not be able to change directions quickly." – Greene



Nick Conner

tackle Brady Taylor, a 2014 prospect who was also forced to go through the camp circuit in search of an offer that didn't come immediately. Taylor committed to Virginia Tech late last summer but switched his pledge to Ohio State after receiving an offer in January.

Conner also wants to have his recruiting wrapped up by his senior season, and like

Taylor he seems to have no qualms about finding the best situation for him if his camp visit doesn't quickly produce an offer. That doesn't mean he'd completely shut the door on his hometown team, though.

"I want to get it done before the season, so maybe mid-July or something like that," he said. "You never know, though. Everything can change."

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