

Scouting Report: 2021 Four-Star Tackle

Donovan Jackson

Ohio State landed its second 2021 commit of the week on Jan. 8 when it secured a commitment from four-star tackle Donovan Jackson.

Although the Buckeyes have recruited Jackson as an offensive tackle, he is rated as the nation's top offensive guard and 57th best player in the 247Sports composite rankings.

After landing safety Jaylen Johnson on Jan. 7 and now adding Jackson, Ohio State is up to nine commits in the class, more than any other team, with an average recruit rating of 95.28, behind just one team: Notre Dame. To say that this class is loaded early on would be an understatement.

Perhaps more impressive than the raw numbers is the balance, which Jackson certainly adds to. Ohio State is without a running back or special teams player, but has a commitment from every other position group: Kyle McCord at quarterback, two receivers (Jayden Ballard, Marvin Harrison Jr.), Sam Hart at tight end, Jackson and tackle Ben Christman up front, Jack Sawyer on the trenches on the other side, Reid Carrico at linebacker and Johnson in the defensive backfield.

That's the kind of start that can set a foundation for a class. Ohio State obviously still has needs, particularly on the defensive line, at halfback and in the defensive backfield, but starting with a solid pledge at every position does two things. Firstly, it establishes what will almost certainly be a steady pledge through the early signing period in December 2020, because kids that commit this early rarely look around, especially when five of them hail from Ohio and two more come from Pennsylvania.

Secondly, it allows Ohio State to take a breather and really survey the landscape. With players that it knows it can trust, Ohio State can afford to take some extra risks and look outside of the midwest for players that it can now really chase without a ton of damage done in a swing and miss.

Look no further than the commitment of Jackson. He's not the typical Texas kid, because while he comes to Ohio State by way of Episcopal High School in Bellaire, TX, he has family ties to Ohio, but he's still coming a long way to commit to Ohio State. He's spurning in-state schools like Texas A&M, and making a decision that, familial ties or not, doesn't happen a whole lot. There's a reason that Texas is primarily a Big 12 and SEC hotbed, and it's because players from the state usually stay near the state.

Because Ohio State had Christman in its back pocket, however, the coaching staff was able to go all-in on a player like Jackson without fear that they'd leave with nothing if he decided to stay home. In this case, there was never a ton of doubt, but the early foundation allowing for more national players was an Urban Meyer staple. Ryan Day is showing off what he learned from his former employer.

In shooting for the stars and going hard after Jackson, Ohio State will be rewarded handsomely on the field. There's a reason that Jackson is rated as well as he is, and there's a reason he's considered the best guard in the country.

Firstly, he has a college-ready frame, checking in at 6-foot-4, 308 pounds as a rising senior. His wingspan makes him a candidate to move up to tackle at the next level, but his athletic ability and

compact hitting ability make him the prototype for a gifted guard prospect.

All of his physicality traits jump off the screen in his tape. He's a mauler, much in the way that Buckeye center Josh Myers was in high school. He has plenty of learning to do at Ohio State in the technical department, but he's as strong and physical as they come. He moves well when asked to pull, which he will do a lot of Columbus, and can get to the second level much faster than someone as large as he is could be expected to. He plays tackle for his high school, but guard looks like more of a natural spot, as mentioned. However, it's hard to go wrong with either spot.

Again, he has plenty to learn, but the talent is very obviously there, and will make for a much easier coaching job for Ohio State's staff. There are no physical limitations here, and Jackson's primary weaknesses are in footwork and hand placement. Both of those can be taught, as can pass protection, which he hasn't done a ton of, especially in the guard spot.

Jackson won't be a first-year starter in the way that Michael Jordan was at guard a few years ago, but his impact will be felt quickly. He could be in for a similar trajectory to the careers of current Buckeye starters like Wyatt Davis and Myers. It'll take a year to learn and develop, but Jackson will find his way onto the field sooner than later. He's too talented and physically gifted not to.

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