

Scouting Report: 2021 Three-Star OT Zen Michalski



Ohio State secured a commitment from one of the most intriguing prospects in the nation on Saturday night when it added Floyds Knobs (Ind.) Floyd Central three-star offensive tackle Zen Michalski to its 2021 class.

Michalski, the 20th member of the class and the third offensive lineman along with guard Donovan Jackson and tackle Ben Christman, has blown onto the recruiting scene in the last months after an incredible showing the first six games of his senior season. Once an undersized, unheard of prospect, Michalski has rocketed up to 6-6.5, 288 pounds and rocketed up the Buckeyes' board with that development.

While he is still a three-star and the No. 625 overall prospect in the 247Sports composite rankings, the intrigue around Michalski comes from that growth spurt. He's not a finished project by any means as a lineman, but anyone that can add that much weight onto a frame that still hasn't approached its maximum is going to be very interesting to an offensive line coach like Greg Studrawa.

The pairing of Michalski and Studrawa makes even more sense when looking at Ohio State's recent offensive line recruiting under the fifth-year assistant. He's certainly landed his share of ready-made prospects like Nicholas Petit-Frere, Wyatt Davis and Paris Johnson, but Studrawa has had plenty of interest in project players before.

In OSU's most recent class, the group in 2020, Studrawa landed four offensive linemen that could be accurately described as "raw" with elite size. Tackle Grant Toutant (6-7, 320), guard Josh Fryar (6-5.5, 305), guard Jakob James (6-5, 285) and tackle Trey Leroux (6-8, 355) all fit the billing. Michalski fits firmly into that group and is the first of his kind in the class of 2021. However, without a ton of top remaining targets on the board save for Tristan Leigh, the Buckeyes may have to turn to another prospect or two to fill out this line class.

That's in the future though, and there's plenty to talk about in the present with Michalski, even if a decent amount of his evaluation has to be projection based on a very small sample size of what he's been able to do with his new, larger frame. In that small sample size, he's been dominant. Will it translate? Well, it depends on where you look.

In run blocking, he's already very strong. He moves extremely well for his size and can get downfield better than the vast majority of players his size. The weight that he added doesn't bog him down, which is a good sign that he'll likely be able to add even more at the next level, where Ohio State will probably hope to get him closer to 310.

Once he gets into the second level, he does a nice job of finding someone to block and making strong initial contact, even though there isn't a ton that can be taken from blowing a high school linebacker a couple yards back on first contact. Still, being able to get there and make that play is a plus for Michalski.

His mobility is probably his best trait right now. It shows up again here, as he gets into the second level quickly and again does a good job of picking up a linebacker to help spring his halfback, who was depending on a strong block on that backside linebacker to provide a seal on the inside. Again, projecting here because of the size of opponent, but he can only block the guys in front of him and he does that very well when his team needs him as a key run blocker.

His pass protection is a work in progress. There are plays like this one, where he's in control, balanced and able to neutralize a speed rush by absorbing the contact with strong footwork. This is a good, repeatable rep.

This is not. He's slow to establish contact and drops to stop the speed rush without actually making contact first to determine where the end is likely to attack. Without that contact, he's caught off-guard and off-balance by a relatively tame move to the inside from the edge rusher.

Michalski is physically dominant enough to get back into the play and "win" the rep by being a Division I caliber prospect against a regular high school football player, but this will be day one stuff to work on when he shows up at Ohio State.

Because of that and despite the very positive run blocking traits, this is very much going to be a developmental job for Studrawa and Ohio State. There's a lot of good to build on here and certainly the foundation for a very good player, but the details aren't there yet for the three-star Indiana prospect. Studrawa isn't new to this kind of player and seems to enjoy the challenge, so this is again a pairing that makes sense for both parties, but don't be surprised to see two years of required development before Michalski is fighting for significant playing time.