

Scouting Report: 2022 Four-Star ATH Dasan McCullough



Ohio State's newest commitment, 2022 Overland Park, KS., athlete Dasan McCullough, is a difficult player to define in a single position or archetype. Usually with recruits, there's a natural comparison to be made, either to a specific player or to a style of player, that can be used to better evaluate the recruit. In McCullough's case, however, there aren't a ton of 6-foot-5 hybrid safety/cornerbacks flying around college football, save for transcendent players like Isaiah Simmons, and it's rarely fair to compare a high school player to someone like that.

With McCullough, however, the comparison may not be entirely unfounded. McCullough is smaller than Simmons, checking in at 220 pounds compared to Simmons nearly 240, but in height and in athletic ability, the two have quite a bit in common. For Ohio State, to see McCullough eventually develop into a Simmons-esque player that can roam the secondary and serve as anything range from a coverage safety to a pass rusher and everything in between feels like the ideal fit into Al Washington's linebackers room.

That's especially apparent when looking at McCullough's surrounding commitments in the class of 2022, Gabe Powers and C.J. Hicks, both of whom are more traditional outside linebackers. If Ohio State wants to ditch the traditional middle linebacker role, as it started to do in 2019, McCullough would serve as a perfect fit for the new bullet position to pair with two athletic, versatile linebackers in the middle of the defense. While Kerry Coombs will likely look to continue with the single-high safety look as Ohio State's main defense, keeping a second defender on the field that could slot into a second-high safety spot, a linebacker, a nickel corner or an edge rusher would have plenty of value, and McCullough could pull that off better than just about any other recruit in the country.

It's easy to say that, because he's played just about every position for his high school team already. He's primarily a defensive back, but what he's been asked to do against the run and the pass is not at all dissimilar from what would be expected at the next level. He's showcased a skillset and athletic ability that would indicate that the transition to a hybrid safety/linebacker would be pretty much natural.

Firstly, against the run from that overhang spot, McCullough is more than capable. He's not quite as quick as Powers and Hicks are because he's still growing into his frame, but he's able to play on the outside against the run, and is a strong tackler that wraps up well at the point of contact. Because of his

size, the outside spot as an overhang safety is likely always going to be a better place for him than a more traditional linebacker role, especially against the run. He's never going to be as compact as a typical linebacker is, and could have issues getting tangled in traffic because of that. He would be much better served against the run serving as a constant roving spy that can make plays in space based on what he sees in front of him.

He's helped quite a bit in that role by his ability to track the ball. He has great vision and isn't easily fooled by window dressing in the backfield, which means that along with keeping track of more traditional runs, he'd likely do really well as a force player to stop strong option attacks. If Ohio State is being gashed by read option keepers or RPOs, McCullough would be a huge asset because he could serve as both a zone defender on the outside against the pass, and as someone that can set a hard edge on the perimeter to force the quarterback back inside.

Because he has a nose for the ball on short passes as well, McCullough playing as a stop-gap for anything trying to attack Ohio State on the perimeter behind the line or within about five yards would make things easier for the rest of the defense, and it doesn't seem like he'd have any issues in that role.

He would have some issues, however, if asked to serve as a true deep safety, or if he spends too much time in man coverage. He doesn't have the range to play that single-high safety role, and lacks the man coverage skills to play as an outside cornerback, or as a slot specialist. Man coverage would be much more manageable against tight ends and running backs, but anything more than that may be asking too much.

That should be pretty easy to work around though, especially because he seems pretty comfortable in zone coverage. If Ohio State wants to stick with the cover 3 that Jeff Hafley ran, McCullough would work well in the four-man underneath shell, but could also thrive in a cover 4 or a cover 2 as more of a linebacker, though that would require a second, more traditional safety to come on the field. So long as he isn't asked to play too much man coverage, or frequently placed in the box as a traditional linebacker, McCullough should be comfortable in Ohio State's defense as soon as he steps on campus as an overhang safety.

Once he grows more into his frame, which will probably take just a season, a starting role won't be far behind.