

Scouting Report: Four-Star QB C.J. Stroud



Ohio State entered the National Early Signing Period still in need of a quarterback. The Buckeyes had four-star Jack Miller signed, sealed and delivered, but one pledge wasn't enough to fill the void on Ohio State's roster. The quarterback room at OSU is, after all, filled with just three scholarship players in 2019, including one (Chris Chugunov that is graduating after the season). That void meant that the Buckeyes needed two 2020 quarterbacks.

On the first day of the early signing period, Ohio State got its second quarterback. Rancho Cucamonga (Ca.) High School product C.J. Stroud, a consensus four-star and the No. 2 pro-style quarterback in the 247Sports composite announced that he would be attending Ohio State, spurning Georgia and Michigan in the process.

"Huge. Huge," Ryan Day said of landing two quarterbacks. "This is not something we took lightly. This was difficult stuff. ... We felt like we had to get more depth in that room. Jack and C.J. both bring something different to the table."

In Stroud, Ohio State is not simply getting a future backup, nor is it getting a warm body to fill a spot in the quarterback room. Stroud is a legitimate top 100 talent and one of the best quarterbacks in the class of 2020. So, what does that mean for Ohio State and for Stroud's fit at Ohio State?

To say that Stroud looks a lot like a Ryan Day quarterback is probably a bit reductionist, but the ties between Stroud, Dwayne Haskins and Justin Fields are strong, both on and off the field. Intangibly, Stroud's 6-3, 195-pound frame is slightly thinner than Day usually likes, but the height lines up exactly with Haskins and Fields. Additionally, Stroud has worked closely with quarterbacks coach Quincy Avery who, you guessed it, has also trained Haskins and Fields.

On the field, Stroud is obviously his own player, but his influences are fairly obvious, and the comparison to Haskins in style is an easy one. He's a ground-up thrower, which Day has talked at length about preferring in his quarterbacks. That essentially means that his velocity and arm strength comes from a strong base and a hip rotation that drives through the release.

"Arm strength is a funny thing," Day said back in October. "Being a quarterback, we can talk for hours about what really arm strength is. It's not the strength of your arm physically, it's all about sequencing, how you can take energy from the ground up.

"So much of it has to do with your footwork, making sure your cleats are in the ground, you're driving the football. Some guys have naturally better whip than other guys, push the ball down the field.

“There’s a certain level of just natural ability and understanding that. A lot of it is coaching and understanding the footwork, timing of the footwork to make sure the ball comes out at the right time with the right pace.”

Stroud has that natural whip that Day looks for, though his motion is a little more compact than most, which isn’t a huge deal but can stand as a little quirk. With that, Stroud has a fluid, natural release and excellent touch, even though his release is a bit slower than that of Haskins or Fields.

Athletically, Stroud isn’t fast, but he is capable of keeping on a read option or making plays outside of the pocket.

All of that combines to make for a tremendously talented, high ceiling quarterback that will have a very good chance to step into a starting role as a sophomore or redshirt freshman. He has small details to hammer out, and will add some weight to his frame, but Stroud is the exact kind of quarterback that Day wants to build his program around.