OSU Football Recruiting 2010

With a 10-2 regular season and the Big Ten title in the bag, and the Rose Bowl still a few weeks out, it's an opportune time to catch up with Coach Tressel and his staff on the recruiting trail for the 2010 class of new Buckeyes.

Tressel's 2010 class is taking shape as another good one for the Buckeyes, despite the restriction of a relatively small number of available scholarships. With 13 verbal commitments already in the fold, Tressel will bring in a total of 20 or so before it's all over in February, and there are a number of blue-chippers still considering OSU among their final options.

Officially Tressel has 17 available slots to fill this year, but that number is always a moving target, considering guys leaving early for the NFL, players leaving the program for various other reasons, walk-ons landing scholarships, or recruits enrolling early and thus counting on the previous year's total. No one but the coaching staff really knows how many recruits will be in the class until signing day, February 3rd. Come to think of it, almost all of this stuff is guesswork for the rest of us too.

We'll get to the commitments shortly, but first, let's talk about Tressel's pursuit of what you might call the Big Three, as he zeroes in on the last six or seven recruits for the class. Now, of course recruiting is an inexact science, and opinions and rankings among the experts vary, but it's fair to say the Buckeyes are still seriously in the running to land the nation's top offensive tackle, the top cornerback, and the #1 defensive tackle.

One out of the three is already nearly assured. Tressel has a 50-50 shot at the second guy, and let's face it...if he manages to get all three to sign on the dotted line, they might as well just make him Governor right now. This will be a good recruiting class even if all three go elsewhere. Getting one or more of these three kids could put Tressel's 2010 class into the nation's top ten...maybe even the top five. That would be remarkable for a class of just 20 players.

Still Out There

With the nation's 2nd-ranked offensive tackle Andrew Norwell already committed, Tressel is trying hard to land No. 1. That would be Seantrel Henderson, (6' 8", 301) from St. Paul, MN, a kid Minnesota coach Tim Brewster would love to keep at home, but who is looking at USC, Florida and Iowa along with Ohio State...and he can go wherever his great big heart desires. In the eyes of many scouts, Henderson is the nation's top player regardless of position. His college choice may come down to the Buckeyes and Trojans, and it may be the only call Tressel is waiting on that doesn't get made till signing day. Henderson has already visited Ohio State, and is out in L.A. this weekend to see the Trojans. Of the Big Three, Henderson is probably the least likely to wind up in Columbus.

Then there's the kid some recruiting observers have dubbed "6-Star", Lamarcus Joyner, the smallish but super-talented cornerback-kick returner from Ft. Lauderdale St. Thomas Aquinas, who reportedly has now narrowed his choices to Florida and OSU. This one had looked like a battle between OSU and Florida State, but the Bowden resignation has Joyner looking away from his childhood "dream school" in Tallahassee, and the Buckeyes chances of landing the 5' 9", 170 lb. defensive back are looking better by the day. Joyner will probably commit around the first of the year. It won't be easy to get this kid out of Florida, but the Bucks are said to feel very good about their chances with Joyner, and they have a good recent track record (Duron Carter and Asst. Coach Cris Carter) at Aquinas. He's the 50-50.

There is also a growing confidence in Columbus that Ohio State will eventually get a commitment from the nation's top defensive tackle, 5-star prospect, Sharrif Floyd, a 6' 3 ", 310 lb. bruiser from Philadelphia. Floyd has told reporters he has made up his mind where he's going, and the consensus among the insiders is that it's Ohio State in the driver's seat. Rivals ranks him the #1 defensive tackle prospect in the country, while Scout has him listed at #4. If landing wide receiver Corey Brown doesn't make it three straight years of Tressel going into Pennsylvania and swiping the state's best player (Pryor in 2008, Dorian Bell in 2009) then getting Floyd almost certainly will.
More on prospects later, including a couple of Glenville kids as usual, but first let's wrap up the guys who have already verbaled to the Buckeyes for 2010.

Class of 2010 to Date

O-Line

Norwell, the 5-star offensive tackle prospect from Cincinnati Anderson has been out of sight if not out of mind since committing to the Buckeyes. In his junior year, opponents searched in vain for a weakness in the 6' 7", 275 lb. Norwell's game. The only weakness turned out to be in his left tibia, which was fractured in September, costing Norwell most of his senior season, and the

entire basketball season as well. He remains one of the top O-line prospects in the nation though, ranked #2 at OT by Scout, while Rivals ranks him the 6th best offensive lineman in the country.

Norwell remains the only offensive lineman in the class so far, as the Buckeyes wait on decisions from Henderson and St. Xavier's Matt James , while they keep some other guys warm on the back burner. With an offensive line that loses only Jim Cordle from the 2009 team, and returns Mike Adams, J.B. Shugarts, Bryant Browning and Mike Brewster, plus a deep 2009 freshman class with Corey Linsley, Marcus Hall, Jack Mewhort and Sam Longo, the OSU coaches can afford to be patient and selective here.

LB's

The 2010 linebacker group may already be full, with commitments from Jamel Turner (6' 2", 205) from Youngstown Ursuline (and this year, Ft. Union Academy) who is ranked #16 at OLB by Scout, and
#23 at DE by Rivals
; St. Ignatius' all-state performer
Scott McVey
(Rivals #30, Scout #22); and
David Durham
(6' 3", 226) who played his junior season in Texas before moving back to his hometown of Charlotte, NC for his senior year. Durham is a little under the radar, but OSU coaches see him a a SAM type backer, or a stand-up defensive end (Leo) at the college level.

The Buckeyes would surely make room in this class for Jordan Hicks , (Rivals #1) considered the best outside linebacker prospect in the country, and they still have a shot at the star from West Chester Lakota, but Hicks isn't an Ohio native and has no historical ties to OSU, and many recruiting observers see him landing elsewhere (Texas?, Florida?) despite Tressel's best efforts. Hicks is certainly good enough to have made the Big Three become the Big Four, had signing him looked more realistic.

DB's

Chad Hagan played mostly safety and running back in high school in Canonsburg, PA, but at 6' 2", 230, he may eventually outgrow the safety position. Hagan has excellent speed to go along with the bulk, and for now the coaches plan to play him at safety as a Buckeye. Hagan has missed time with injuries, and in the course of treatment, discovered a heart condition that required some time off. All indications are that he is going to be good to go in the fall though.

OSU took a slew of DB's the last couple of years, and right now, experience at the safety positions is the biggest concern, with both Anderson Russell and Kurt Coleman gone in 2010. I expect there will be four DB's in this class when it's all said and done, hopefully with Joyner

among them. That's also where the two Glenville kids come in. More on that later.

D-Line

Two northeast Ohio players are hoping to carry on the tradition of dominant defensive ends at Ohio State with their commitments to the Buckeyes. Solon's Darryl Baldwin (6' 6", 247) is ranked #40 at DE by Scout and
#22 by Rivals
. And the first player to commit to the Buckeyes in the class of 2010 was defensive end
J.T. Moore
from Boardman, a 6' 3", 230 lb. athlete that Scout has ranked #34 at defensive end, and
Rivals has at #13
. Even if Thad Gibson leaves early, the Bucks are still loaded at DE going into 2010, (and have already signed two more DE's for 2011.)

No defensive tackles are on the committed list just yet, but as noted above, Sharrif Floyd looks like he'll be a Buckeye, and most insiders expect at least two defensive tackles will eventually be signed to this class. After projected 2010 starters Dexter Larimore and Johnny Simon, there's not a lot of depth at DT on this roster. Sophomore Garret Goebel and redshirt freshman Adam Bellamy is about it. Presumably Floyd could see lots of early playing time if he signs with OSU.

WR's

Plenty of offensive weapons are committed to the Buckeyes for 2010 as well, especially at the wide receiver position. James Louis (Scout #24, Rivals #32) recently reaffirmed his earlier verbal pledge to Ohio State when some of the home-state Florida schools came back after him in an attempt to pry him off his OSU commitment. No dice, said Louis, who many recruiting experts had seen as a lock for Florida. Louis has been selected to play in the Under Armour All-American Game in January, and says he's 100% Buckeye.

The aforementioned Corey Brown (6' 0", 186) from Springfield, PA joins the Buckeyes as Rivals 7th-ranked athlete in the nation, and he's projected as a wide receiver and possible kick returner in Columbus. Scout ranks him as the #19 wide receiver in the country. Buckeye fans will have to figure out some way to distinguish between this Corey Brown and
that other wide receiver Corey Brown
from PA, who was in the 2009 class, hails from Monroeville, and redshirted this season. Good luck. It's possible that the Monroeville Corey Brown will end up on defense as a cornerback. That would help. (Trust me, within a couple of years, they'll
both
be very well known.)

Rounding out a terrific receiver group is local product Tyrone Williams , from Shaw High

School. Williams is a long, lanky (6' 7", 215) kid with 4.5 speed and off-the-charts potential. All three of these wide receiver recruits are 4-star prospects according to the guys who get paid to know this stuff. With Louis, Brown and Williams joining an already young OSU receiver corps, the depth there should continue to be a strength for the Buckeyes. In fact, with all three starters back from 2008 (Posey, Sanzenbacher, Carter) other veterans Taurian Washington and Lamaar Thomas, plus two other very solid prospects coming off redshirt freshman years (James Jackson and Chris Fields), the depth will be ridiculous.

RB's

The OSU coaches went looking for size at the running back position for 2010 with their "big" back, Brandon Saine, entering his senior year, and the rest of the stable somewhat smaller. They found what they were looking for in Roderick Smith (6' 2", 216) from Ft. Wayne Harding, one of the top-rated running backs in the land. Rivals rates Smith the #4 running back in the country, while Scout has him ranked #8 . Smith's size and style are somewhere between Robert Smith and Eddie George, and the coaches can only hope that's where his game turns out to be as well.

Not counted among the 13 commitments for 2010, but also slated to arrive next fall, is Carlos Hyde , a holdover from the 2009 recruiting class who attended a prep school this past season to get his academic house in order. Hyde (6' 0", 225) from Naples, Florida was ranked the #1 fullback last year by Scout, but he has always been projected by the OSU staff as a big tailback prospect, and he'll round out a Buckeye running back corps that will be one of the deepest in years.

Consider: Co-starters Dan Herron and Brandon Saine return in 2010. Jordan Hall was the surprise freshman contributor in 2009, and is of course back as well. Last year's Top 5 RB recruit Jamal Berry redshirted due to injuries in 2009, and has four years of eligibility remaining. Jermil Martin looked good in limited 2009 duty as a "big back" option, and is just a sophomore in 2010. Add Hyde and another potential stud in Rod Smith to that quintet, and next year's Buckeyes not only look bigger overall at the running back, but much better able to weather the kinds of minor injuries that made them look pretty thin at times in '09. And Saine will be the only senior in the group in 2010.

QB's

At quarterback, Ohio State is dipping into the legacy pool for Taylor Graham (6' 4", 215) from Wheaton, Illinois, the nation's 14th-ranked quarterback according to Rivals, and #25 in the Scout rankings

. Graham is the son of former Buckeye QB Kent Graham, the 1991 starter at OSU, who went on to a decent pro career with the Giants and Cardinals. Like his dad, Graham has a very strong arm, and is more of a pro-style pocket passer than the current incumbent in Columbus. He will likely be the only QB in this class, as OSU is eying a couple of hot prospects for the class of 2011, most notably Braxton Miller.

PK-P

Punter/Kicker Drew Basil from Chillicothe is ranked as the #8 kicker in the nation by Rivals, and #5 by Scout. He is a welcome addition to the roster, as the 2009 starters at punter (Jon Thoma) and kicker (Aaron Pettrey) are gone, leaving sophomore Ben Buchanan the only other scholarship kicker on the roster for 2010. Iowa game hero Devin Barclay may end up on scholarship, but there's a long term need at both punter and placekicker, and Basil can do both (as does Buchanan).

Who Else?

If you add Carlos Hyde to the 13 commitments already in the class, and your projected limit is 20 guys, you've only got a half a dozen spots to fill. So let the guesswork begin...

Pencil in Sharrif Floyd in one spot, and assume that Henderson and Joyner (and Hicks, for that matter) have scholarships if they want them, no matter what else happens. For our purposes, let's say two of those four (Floyd and Joyner?) become Buckeyes and the other two don't. That leaves four scholarships.

It has long been assumed that the two outstanding defensive backs from Glenville, Christian Bryant and Latwan Anderson could well end up in Columbus, joining numerous other Glenville alums on OSU's roster. Coach Ted Ginn Sr. always has his best prospects commit late in the process, as a way to get more exposure to FBS scouts for his second tier guys, and he has been reliable over the years at feeding the pipeline down I-71 to Jim Tressel with his very best players.

Bryant is projected as a cornerback in college, and Scout has him ranked as the nation's 6th best corner. He's ranked #10 by Rivals. The recruiting experts I talk to feel Bryant could play early at OSU, at either cornerback or safety.

Anderson can play on either side of the ball, or as a kick returner. Rivals rates him #2 in the nation in their "Athlete" category. He has the size and quickness to project as a safety at the

college level. Scout rates Anderson as their #14 safety . He has visited Michigan State, and could end up there if his academic status won't get him into OSU.

While both reportedly have OSU offers, Bryant is probably closer to a sure thing, as Anderson may still have to qualify academically. Let's assume Bryant is a Buckeye, with the possibility that both kids end up in Scarlet and Gray. That leaves two or three spots...

Defensive tackle Jonathan Hankins , from Detroit has an offer from OSU as well, and he is involved in quite a recruiting skirmish involving Michigan, and Florida along with the Buckeyes. He's ranked as Scout's #49 DT, but has been moving up the charts with a bullet. The 6' 2", 300 lb. lineman is said to be deciding around Christmas.

St. Xavier's offensive lineman Matt James still has an OSU offer, but he may end up playing for Brian Kelly, whether that ends up being at Cincinnati or Notre Dame.

Two-time Ohio Mr. Football award winner Erick Howard , from N. Canton will probably not get an offer from OSU, owing to academic considerations. Howard had been given a goal to shoot for by the OSU staff, but has apparently not been able to get over that bar.

There has been some recent interest by OSU in a pair of players from Middletown H.S. Defensive end prospect Rashad Frazer and cornerback Jerry Gates have the attention of the OSU coaches, and may be considered as fall-back options as the process plays out.

And Coach Tressel almost always comes up with a last-minute surprise out of nowhere...last year quarterback Kenny Guiton was just the most recent example. The coach has been on the road a lot the last couple weeks, visiting undecided prospects and also some of his verbal commits in Florida and Texas. It won't be too much longer before we see how he closes out the class of 2010. Stay tuned.

Scout.com - Buckeye 2010 Commitments

Rivals.com - Buckeye 2010 Commitments