The Ohio State football recruiting machine is piling up early commitments in their 2011 class, and laying the foundation for 2012 by identifying and camping with the best of this year's high school juniors. But none of those guys will wear the Scarlet and Gray this fall, so we'll also revisit the incoming freshman class of 2010 as part of this overview of the next generation of Buckeyes.

The project got a little more ambitious as it went along, but I hope it's still not biting off more than the average OSU fan/reader wants to chew in terms of Buckeye recruiting. By organizing the three-year recruiting cycle by position group, the hope is you'll get a good feel for the future OSU talent at each spot on the field, and perhaps get a better picture of how each class builds on the last, and predicts the next. First, a little commentary on each class.

**2010**

It's no slight to any of this year's freshmen to acknowledge that OSU recruiting for 2010 didn't work out the way the coaches had hoped. An unusual number of blue-chip national recruits like Seantrel Henderson, Lamarcus Joyner and Sharrif Floyd had OSU as finalists, but in recruiting there's no ribbon for second place, and all three chose a school other than Ohio State in the end. The Ohio State coaches had to save spots for the elite players, many of whom don't decide until on or about National Signing Day. As one example of the problems this can cause, missing on Henderson and Matt James at the final hour left OSU

with just one offensive lineman in the class, and led to a change in strategy there for 2011.

An early OSU offer to QB Nick Montana was spurned in favor of the U. of Washington, and then Tressel and Co. let some of the best in-state talents like Jordan Hicks (Texas), Spencer Ware (LSU), Matt James (Notre Dame) and Latwan Anderson (Miami) get away, for a variety of reasons. Winding up as the also-ran in so many cases was partly due to the daunting depth chart in Columbus and the promise of earlier playing time elsewhere. In some cases, an in-state talent (i.e. running back Ware) could have been deterred by an out-of-state commit (like Rod Smith) already in the OSU fold. But in other cases, the Buckeyes just got beat in the highly competitive recruiting battles for the top talent.

The OSU coaches also took some risks with several recruits who had academic concerns, a gamble that hasn't burned them yet, but could still do so. Smith, for example, didn't enroll for summer quarter along with the rest of the class, due to some issues with his high school coursework, though he is expected in camp in early August.

In poker they say you can't win if you're not in it at the end. So it's hard to find fault with Tressel for making it to the final table with so many of the country's premier players at their respective positions. Joyner and Floyd do look like monster talents, but the other "misses" are less regrettable. It wasn't a great year for talent in-state, and then out-of-state events didn't go OSU's way either. It happens.

This near-perfect storm of missteps and bad recruiting luck though, only dropped the Buckeyes down to a ranking at #15 (or #16 , or #20 ) nationally in the recruiting class evaluations by the scouts. In other words, the kids who did choose to be Buckeyes are a quality group, and all the hand-wringing about the 2010 class may be a bit overblown in the grand scheme of things.

(More on the 2010 recruits in a Feb. 2010 Buckeye Leaves )

**2011**

For all the recruiting breaks that went the other way with the 2010 class, an equal number appear to be going right for the 2011 group. The in-state talent is strong, and the Buckeyes are well-positioned to get most of Ohio's best players. In what may become known as the Jim Tressel-Mack Brown Strategy, Ohio State has again moved decisively and early to identify and secure commitments from the players they wanted. With seven months (and the recruits' entire

senior year of football) to go before signing day, OSU has filled 17 spots in a class that is expected to hold 22 or 23 recruits. And most of the remaining spots are marked "reserved" for the handful of OSU targets still officially undecided.

As you might expect, and clearly based on quantity as well as quality, Texas (with 22 commits) and Ohio State (17) are ranked at the top of the first recruiting class rankings of the 2011 season. As of last week, only one other Big Ten team had more than eight verbal commitments (Indiana's 18). Penn State has one. The wisdom of the Tressel-Brown philosophy is still to be determined, but let's just say it's easier when you're the top dog in a high school recruiting hotbed, and can take the pick of the litter.

Other schools choose to retain more flexibility...waiting to watch kids play their senior seasons before granting 4-year free rides. There's clearly some upside to operating that way. But the elite players are being spotted and recruited earlier and earlier all the time now, and the Buckeyes have no need to watch Braxton Miller, for example, play his senior year to know he's the guy they want as Terrelle Pryor's successor.

Re-erecting the fence around Ohio

OSU was criticized for getting just four of Ohio's consensus ten best players in 2001 (although they didn't even offer several of them). Here's something close to the consensus top ten in Ohio for 2011...

1) Braxton Miller (QB, Huber Hts. Wayne) - **OSU Commit**
2) Doran Grant (CB, Akron St.Vincent St Mary)
3) Trey DePriest (ILB, Springfield)
4) Michael Bennett (DT, Centerville) - **OSU Commit**
5) Steve Miller (DE, Canton McKinley) - **OSU Commit**
6) Ken Hayes (DE, Toledo Whitmer) - **OSU Commit**
7) Chase Farris (DE/DT, Elyria) - **OSU Commit**
8) Ryan Kelly (C, Lakota West)
9) Ron Tanner - (S, Columbus Eastmoor) - **OSU Commit**
10) Nick Vannett - (TE, Westerville Central) - **OSU Commit**

Safety Eilar Hardy , QB Patrick Coyne , OT Aundrey Walker and LB Jarrett Grace (ND commit) make some people's lists, but there's very little disagreement about the top six or seven guys. Of those in that group not yet committed to OSU, Grant is said to be a heavy Buckeye lean, and DePriest, who is a longtime friend of Braxton Miller, is reportedly down to OSU or Alabama, with the Tide perhaps having a slight edge. OSU went to Illinois to get their center, so Kelly does not have an offer from the Buckeyes.

The remaining 5-6 spots in the OSU 2011 group are expected to be filled by some combination of the following...(with the disclaimer that Jim Tressel almost always pulls at least one late recruit from off the "experts'" radar)

- Grant and DePriest surely are in if they choose to be.

- As many as three of the notoriously late-committing Glenville kids could join the class. The aforementioned Walker , a massive (6' 6", 355) offensive lineman, wide receiver/kick returner Shane Wynn , and LB/DE Andre Sturdivant could all end up Buckeyes, though grades are a concern with Sturdivant, and Wynn has been talking up Miami lately. Walker's a Buckeye.

- Another linebacker is a strong possibility, and a certainty if they lose DePriest. Ejuan Price from the Pittsburgh area has visited and OSU is competing with Pitt and others for him.

- Another DB (in addition to Grant) is possible. Dondi Kirby from Monroeville, PA or Jabari Gorman from Miami are possible candidates if they go that way. A third receiver will be added...either Wynn or someone else...but that's about it.

It's pretty much "game over" for 2011 before a lot of OSU's Big Ten competitors get out of the gate. You'll see the rest of the class below.

**2012**

At the rate they're going, it could take a secret password to get into the OSU class of 2012. Ohio State will be offering as few as 14 scholarships, at best a couple more than that. And there are already 10-12 in-state players projectable as elite talents, and probable Ohio State offers, even before they play their junior seasons. The good news is that the Buckeyes seem to be in good favor with all of them, but I cannot remember a time when the process of filling a recruiting class was this advanced, over two full years from their arrival date.

Josh Perry , a fast, rangy linebacker from Olentangy H.S. was the first to commit for 2012, and we'll drop the other OSU-worthy names in that talented group of Ohioans as we go along.

We'll take it by position group, and dive right in.....

*(I'm linking primarily to Scout.com for information on OSU players and prospects, with many other links mixed in. I've settled on Scout after trying them all, for their ease of use and quantity of information. And I must credit Scout's Bill Greene for the major legwork on the 2012 OSU prospects. No one I know of is more in tune with the Ohio State recruiting picture than Greene.)*

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**Quarterbacks**

Coming this Fall (2010)

Taylor Graham - QB 6' 5", 225 (Wheaton, IL) North - There's a bit of a run on legacy recruits lately at OSU, as you'll soon see, and Graham is the son of the 1991 starter at QB for the Buckeyes, Kent Graham. Pro set QB with good size, and great arm strength like his dad. Ranked as the nation's #14 QB by Rivals , and #51 by Scout. Prep career plagued by leg injuries.

A Year Away (2011)

Braxton Miller - QB 6' 3", 200 (Huber Hts, OH) Wayne - We'll wait till he puts on the uniform, but every Ohio State fan expects Miller to take over for Pryor as the OSU quarterback. A five-star recruit, offers from every top program, by consensus the nation's #1 quarterback prospect...sorry Taylor Graham, you might be holding the clipboard.

Here's more on Miller from an April Buckeye Leaves... or check some YouTube video highlights .
He's a Pryoresque athlete, with much more advanced passing mechanics and accuracy than Pryor possessed at that stage. Hence the excitement about him in Columbus.

OSU-Worthy for 2012

It's tough to get an elite QB to commit the year after you recruit another one, so the Buckeyes may pass on the position in a year with limited openings. The best in Ohio may be Lexington's Collin Michael
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**Offensive Line**

Coming this Fall (2010)

Andrew Norwell - OT 6' 6", 290 lbs; Cincinnati Anderson - Norwell broke his leg as a H.S. senior last fall, but is 100% and ready to roll. Rated the nation's #2 offensive

tackle by Scout
, and #9 by Rivals. Scouts say he's got the nasty streak coaches love. A high school coach I respect from SW Ohio says he's the best Ohio tackle he's seen since Pace.

A Year Away (2011)

With just one O-lineman in the last class, Tressel and OL coach Jim Bollman needed numbers and inside people this year. Both OSU's starting guards are NFL-bound seniors so a fresh infusion of the roadgrader type guards they like was a priority in this class, and the Bucks found what they wanted in northeast Ohio. After Tressel and Bollman got stuck waiting at the altar last year, Carter, Underwood and Brown all were targeted early and Brown was the last to commit on April 3rd. None of the three were well known on the national recruiting scene, but the OSU coaches went after them aggressively, and got early commitments. In Brian Bobek, Tressel swiped one of the best players in Illinois.

Chris Carter - OG 6' 4" 320 Cleveland JFK - a player in the Bryant Browning mold? Coaches will be watching closely this fall, hoping their judgment pays off.

Antonio Underwood - OG 6' 3", 300 Shaker Hts. - Reportedly athletic for his size, Again, we'll learn more paying attention to his senior year.

Tommy Brown OT 6' 5" 300 Akron Firestone - Could project at guard or tackle in college. Had offers from MSU, WVU and MAC's.

Brian Bobek - C 6' 3", 278 Palatine, IL - OSU liked Bobek's quickness, good hands and intelligence, and made him the only center they offered. Scout's #1 center.

OSU-Worthy in 2012

Anthony Stanko , OG, Warren Howland, Kyle Kalis , OT, St Eds; Zach Higgins , OT Marlington

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**Defensive LIne**

Coming this Fall (2010)

Darryl Baldwin - DE 6' 7", 260 Solon - They say you can't teach size...power defensive end...played well in all-star game this summer

J.T. Moore - DE 6' 3", 235 Boardman - first commit in the class...power combined with speed...athletic rusher...sister an OSU basketball player

Jonathan Hankins - DT 6' 3", 315 (Detroit) Southeastern - defensive tackle from that state up north...a late signee in January, but could play early with OSU a little thin at DT.

A Year Away (2011)

Ken Hayes - DE 6' 5", 255 Toledo Whitmer - Four-star player, and Scout's #10-ranked DE. First commit in what looks to be a stellar D-line group. Nation's #2 DE by Rivals

Steve Miller - DE 6' 4", 230 Canton McKinley - Nation's #4-ranked DE by Scout, #10 by Rivals
...teamed with Hayes and Farris, the future at DE is secure.

Chase Farris - DE 6' 6", 265 Elyria - Another nationally ranked defensive lineman ( #12 DE by Rivals
, #9 DT by Scout)...has versatility to play inside or outside on the D-line.

Michael Bennett - DT 6' 3", 280 Centerville - ranked as #6 DT in nation by Scout, while Rivals has him as the nation's #1 defensive tackle . Meyer and Saban offered this young man from the school that produced Herbstreit, Nugent and Hawk. He's staying home.

Joel Hale - DT 6' 5", 295 (Greenwood, IN) Center Grove - more interior size and power at DT...Scout's #29 DT., #34 by Rivals

OSU-Worthy in 2012

Another bumper crop of four and five-star Ohio defensive linemen hope to receive OSU offers this September: Names to remember... Chris Wormley , Toledo Whitmer; Adolphus Washington, Cincinnati Taft; Greg McMullen ,
Akron Hoban;
Se'Von Pittman
, Canton McKinley;

LaTroy Lewis
, Akron Hoban.

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**Linebackers**

Coming this Fall (2010)

Scott McVey - LB 6' 0", 225 (Cleveland) St. Ignatius - Scout's #3 ranked MLB, McVey can rush the passer and cover in the passing game...lacks ideal size for an inside LB, but is a gamer.

Dave Durham - LB 6' 3", 225 Charlotte (NC) Christian School - an off the radar recruit whose family moved to Texas and back to NC during his prep years...probably projects at the Leo position at OSU. Our Mike Furlan has more here .

Jamel Turner was originally in this LB class, but will not be playing for OSU...more on that here .

A Year Away (2011)

No linebackers are among the 17 early commitments for 2011, with Trey DePriest the biggest uncommitted prize.
Ejuan Price
is an OSU target, with or without DePriest.
Michael Caputo
of Imperial, PA also holds an offer from the Buckeyes, but they've got Pitt and PSU to contend with there.

OSU-Worthy for 2012

Josh Perry of Olentangy just became the first commitment for the class of 2012. He's a great athlete who could play tight end or even wide receiver, but probably will be an LB at OSU. Beyond Perry, the coaches may be looking out of state for their LB's. Michigan's Ja

mes Ross
is one of the players in that conversation.

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**Wide Receivers**

Coming this Fall (2010)

James Louis - WR 5' 11", 180 (Delray Beach, FL) Atlantic - Louis *(pictured above)* passed the "look test" on arrival this summer...SEC was after him, but he stayed with early OSU commit...he is often compared favorably with Santonio Holmes...his OSU position coach called him "an excellent returner"...something the 2010 Bucks could use.
#33 WR by Rivals

Corey Brown - WR 6' 1", 185 (Springfield, PA) Cardinal O'Hara - rated the nation's #10 athlete by Rivals
, and #25 at WR by Scout, Brown is another freshman who could contribute early in return game...not to be confused with OSU's
other Corey Brown

Tyrone Williams - WR 6' 7", 210 (E. Cleveland) Shaw - with OSU's depth at WR, Williams might benefit from a redshirt year to add muscle to his frame...high upside for this rangy and fast, but still raw talent. Ranked #49 at WR by Rivals.

A Year Away (2011)

Evan Spencer - WR 6' 1", 185 Vernon Hills, IL - a legacy recruit for OSU, the son of standout Buckeye running back Tim Spencer is a star in his own right. The four-star recruit is ranked
#35 at WR by Rivals
, and #20 by Scout. This
Junior year highlight video
shows an athlete who looks just as good on defense at safety.

Devin Smith - WR 6' 1", 175 Massillon - Smith came to OSU's summer camp and earned a Buckeye offer with great hands, smooth routes and leaping ability. Held offers from all the big Midwest programs, but OSU's was the one he wanted. Rivals #44 WR

The plan is for (at least) one more WR in this class. As noted above, Glenville's Shane Wynn has an OSU offer, and most observers feel he'll eventually be a Buckeye. They have another offer or two out to out-of-state players.

OSU-Worthy in 2012

No Ohio receivers on the no-brainer lists yet...but it's so early...with limited scholarships in 2012 and lots of depth on the roster, this could be an area where they add just one player in 2012. Cameron Wilson of Dublin Jerome is a name to remember.

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**Defensive Backs**

Coming this Fall (2010)

Christian Bryant - CB 5' 11", 178 (Cleveland) Glenville - one of the nation's top cornerbacks (#8 Scout, #10 Rivals ) he has excellent ball skills and coverage ability...closes on the football in pass defense.

Bradley Roby - CB 6' 0", 180 (Suwanee, GA) Peachtree Ridge - committed early to Vanderbilt, but then big time offers started coming in and OSU grabbed what might turn out to be a steal. Rivals

Verlon Reed - S 6' 2", 190 (Columbus) Marion-Franklin -Played at QB in two high school all-star games this summer, including "Big 33" game, and was named MVP in both. Versatile athlete projecting as a safety at OSU. From what I've seen, he can return kickoffs for the Buckeyes right now. - Rivals

Chad Hagan - S 6' 2", 227 (Canonsburg, PA) Canon-McMillan - might outgrow safety position into LB at OSU. Overcame heart ailment as prep player, and is on the road back to full health. Rivals

A Year Away (2011)

DerJuan Gambrell - CB 6' 2", 180 Toledo Rogers - long, smooth coverage corner...ranked #19 CB by Scout and #27 by Rivals

Ron Tanner - S 6' 1", 190 Columbus Eastmoor - Rose quickly as one of the top players in Ohio...ranked as #7 at safety by Scout... #46 by Rivals ...hard hitter..great student.

Jeremy Cash - S 6' 2", 185 Plantation, FL - the Sunshine State connection continues for OSU...Cash is rated the nations #17 safety by Rivals ...#24 by Scout

Most OSU recruiting observers feel that five-star cornerback Doran Grant from Akron SVSM will join this class by signing day. As noted above, Jabari Gorman or Dondi Kirby could be added as well.

OSU-Worthy for 2012

Already on the Buckeye radar for 2012...*(if this is not an OSU safety's name, I don't know what is)* Bam Bradley from Trotwood Madison and DeShawn Hall from GlenOak.
Allen Gant from Sylvania Southview is listed as a corner but he's got the size to play safety right now.

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**Running Backs**

Coming this Fall (2010)

Carlos Hyde - RB 6' 0", 235 Fork Union Military - Hyde got the jump on the other new guys by enrolling in January and going through spring ball after spending his senior season at Fork Union. Right now he's probably the #5 tailback. Good feet, and a nice power-speed combination. Maybe he can work his way onto the field.

Roderick Smith - RB 6' 3", 220 (Ft. Wayne, IN) Harding - At present, Smith is trying to get his OSU entrance eligibility squared away, and he is still expected on the August 5 enrollment date for fall quarter. Reminds a bit of Eddie George...ranked by Rivals as the #6 RB, and #8 by Scout. Talented running back...hope he gets the school thing together.

Adam Griffin - RB 5' 9", 185 (Columbus) St. Francis DeSales - Archie's kid was going to walk on at OSU, but Jim Tressel offered him a scholarship anyway. Classy or foolish?...or both? I wish the young man well in making his own name at OSU. Being the son of a legend can't be easy.

Crazy how they've now got the sons of the #1 and the #3 all time career rushing leaders at Ohio State with Griffin and Evan Spencer. Next I'll be telling you they're recruiting #4 Keith Byars' kid!

A Year Away (2011)

There are no running backs yet in the ongoing class of 2011, and there likely won't be any when they're done. Tailback depth chart is six deep even after Saine leaves this year.

OSU-Worthy for 2012

They're recruiting Keith Byars' kid. Seriously. He impressed the OSU coaches at their summer camp, but he's probably at best the third running back on the 2012 wish list behind Warren Ball of Columbus DeSales and
Brionte Dunn
of Canton GlenOak. Both are big time tailbacks, and both like the Buckeyes.

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**Tight Ends**

Coming this Fall (2010)

No tight ends in the 2010 class.

A Year Away (2011)

Nick Vannett - TE 6' 6", 230 Westerville Central - A Columbus product who is rated the nation's #12 TE by Rivals and by also #12 by Scout. Had a boatload of BCS conference offers but he's at home now.

Jeff Heuerman - TE 6' 5", 225 (Naples, FL) Baron Collier - A highly rated tight end himself, Heuerman committed before Vannett, and then urged his friend to join him in Columbus. He's rated the #17 TE by Rivals , and #26 by Scout.

OSU-Worthy for 2012

Might be another position to pass on in 2012 with two young talents in the ranks from 2011.

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Hope that summary clarifies more than it confuses. Back next week with the first position group previews...you know...guys who will actually be playing this fall.

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