



The preseason All-American teams and All-Big Ten teams are out, and they are littered with the names of Ohio State players: Miller, Roby, Shazier, Norwell, Mewhort, Barnett. This article is not about them. Every summer I take a stab at identifying ten Ohio State players who may not yet be household names in Big Ten country, but are about to be.

It's a hit or miss endeavor, as you might imagine, and for the sake of consistency, I have a couple of rules I follow in picking my list. As always, no seniors are included. because I want a list of players on the front end of their college careers, with their best days of OSU football still ahead of them when 2013 is over. While breakouts by seniors are welcome (thanks, Reid Fragel, Doug Worthington, Nader Abdallah, Shawn Lane, Antonio Smith, et al.) a look at [this year's roster](#) doesn't reveal many potential Fragels. Receiver Chris Fields might be the best bet to make a big senior splash. But he can't be on my list, because...rules.

Also, no true freshmen are allowed. This is not to suggest there will be no breakout seasons by this year's monster class of first-year Bucks. I fully expect to see a lot of Jalin Marshall and Vonn Bell and Joey Bosa and Dontre Wilson before it's all over, but Bell is the only freshman I can see with any shot at being a starter for Urban Meyer on August 31. Look for a whole slew of 2013 recruits in this space a year from now.

The 2013 Buckeyes are a veteran group on offense, but will be relying on seven new defensive starters. So my list of this season's breakout players is necessarily weighted towards the defense. One thing I've learned from doing this for several years is that, no matter how talented and promising a young player may be, it's a mistake to predict he'll "break out" if you can't realistically project him into a starting job, or at least a regular spot in the game day rotation. This season, perhaps more than usual, there will be an awful lot of talent waiting its turn in Columbus.

Here then are the ten Buckeyes I see breaking out in 2013...

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10. [Jamal Marcus](#) - DE - #34 - Soph. - 6' 3', 245 lbs. - Durham, NC

Marcus came to OSU last year as an outside linebacker, but he has been switched to the defensive line, and will be vying for playing time as a backup to fellow sophomore Noah Spence

at the weakside (Leo) rush end spot. He's one of just two players on this list (Mike Thomas the other) who are not projected as starters for the Buckeyes in 2013, so his inclusion is more of a hunch. Junior Steve Miller is on the depth chart at the Leo as well, and even true freshman Tyquan Lewis could see early time there, but Marcus looks to possess that speed-power combination that all good pass rushers need. Although we've only seen him on special teams, where he registered 10 tackles in 2012, I think he has a chance to get regular field time in the d-line rotation.

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9. [Curtis Grant](#) - LB - #14 - Junior- 6' 3", 241 lbs - Richmond, VA

The long-awaited breakout of the talented inside linebacker in 2013 is less an expectation among Buckeye fans than it is a fervent hope. Arguably the only member of [my list a year ago](#) to prove me wrong, Grant showed flashes this spring that he is ready to fulfill his promise. Midway through last season, Zach Boren rescued Ohio State by filling the problem area at middle linebacker, but the crucial MLB job is open again. No single question mark about the championship caliber of the 2013 Buckeyes is greater than the uncertainty concerning the level

of play they will get at Grant's position. There are no questions at all about his physical ability, and his mastery of the defense is reportedly coming around. There's a lot of pressure on Grant this fall, but there is also a terrific opportunity for him to make his mark.

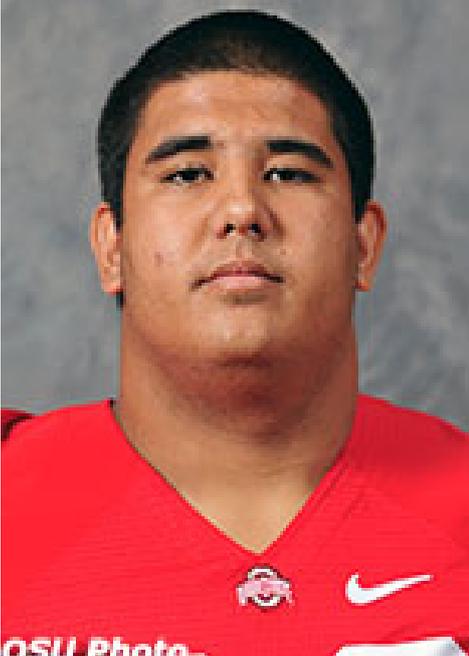
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8. [Josh Perry](#) - LB - #37 - Soph. - 6' 4", 243 lbs. - Lewis Center, OH

OSU fans got a glimpse of what Perry can do last season when he got into 10 games as a true freshman and registered five tackles, and this spring he was penciled in as the starter at the strongside (Sam) linebacker spot. A special all-around athlete, Perry ran the 400 meters and long-jumped 23 feet while at Olentangy High School, and he has reportedly added weight since enrolling early at OSU, while maintaining his speed and agility. There is concern about depth at linebacker for this 2013 team, because of the five freshmen linebackers recruited last season, only Perry and Camren Williams remain at the position. But with the defense playing in the nickel much of the time, only two linebackers will be on the field, and one of them is going to be Ryan Shazier. At the outset, it appears, the other one will be either Josh Perry or Curtis Grant. My bet is that Perry is going to break out in 2013 along with Grant, but probably not without a few growing pains.

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