



I'm always watching college football, and the Big Ten specifically, with an eye toward players I could reasonably project into a Browns uniform one day. It has always made sense to me that the home team should draft and sign more Big Ten talent. They're accustomed to playing in this weather for one thing, and fan familiarity counts for something too.

The new Browns have been decidedly averse to Ohio State players, for whatever reason seeming to ignore the rich history there, from Groza to Schafrath to DeLeone to Houston to Warfield. The current roster has just one OSU player, rookie tackle Reid Fragel, recently signed off the Bengals waiver wire, although picks from elsewhere in the conference...Joe Thomas comes to mind...haven't worked out badly.

The [Browns have drafted](#) just two OSU players (WR Brian Robiskie, 2nd round, 2009 and TE Darnell Saunders; 6th round, 2002) since Bill Belichick took an inexplicable flyer on Craig Powell on his way out of town in 1995. And there have been a few other high-profile misses by the Browns on Big Ten players. Courtney Brown of Penn State and Michigan's Braylon Edwards were a No 1 and a No. 3 overall pick respectively. That might have gone better. Ditto [Tom Cousineau](#)

Thomas is the only starter among Big Ten alumni on the current Browns. They signed four bench players for 2013 from the ranks of the Big Ten, including Fragel, former Minnesota QB MarQueis Gray as an H-Back-tight end experiment, reserve linebacker Eric Martin from Nebraska, and Cleveland's own Brian Hoyer from Michigan State. Hoyer of course would make two starters...were he not on crutches.

Trends in college football being what they are, this dearth of Big Ten players on the Browns roster is clearly a problem of supply as much or more than it is one of demand. That topic will be dealt with in a subsequent article titled, "Why the Big Ten Blows". For now, it is enough to notice that there's quite a bit of draft-eligible talent in the conference coming into the 2014 draft, and that the Browns have a slew of picks.

As luck would have it, some of the best the conference has to offer in 2014 is at positions of need for the Browns...with running backs, wide receivers, cornerbacks and offensive guards well-represented...(alas, no senior quarterbacks to speak of). So what follows is my list of a dozen or so Big Ten players I wouldn't mind seeing in an orange hat next year:

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[Andrew Norwell](#) - G - Ohio State - 6' 6", 316 lbs. Norwell was first team All-Big Ten a year ago, and is a near lock to repeat. Has been a fixture at left guard since his sophomore year, and played 98.8 percent of the team's offensive snaps in 2012. OSU rushes for 310 yards a game largely behind Norwell and his mate Jack Mewhort (see below) on the left side. Huge, athletic, durable, [with a work ethic](#) . Can play some tackle too. Screams 10-year NFL

starter.

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[Chris Borland](#) - LB - Wisconsin - 5' 11", 248 lbs - The young man from the Dayton area is just flat out the league's best linebacker. He racked up 143 tackles as a sophomore in 2011 and hasn't looked back. Borland is fearless and he plays with all-out effort all the time...a tackling machine who hits like a truck. He was voted All-Big Ten by the coaches a year ago, and although he has missed a game with an injury this season, Borland is still 4th in the conference with 70 tackles, plus four sacks. An instinctive hitter and a punishing tackler, he's got a full tank of that stuff you can't teach.

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[Darqueze Dennard](#) - CB - Michigan State - 5'11", 188 lbs. - A tough, physical cornerback, and the best defensive back on what is statistically the nation's best defense, Dennard is rated as one of the top half-dozen cornerbacks in the draft, so he's not going to be around on Day 3. It would probably take one of the Browns' two 3rd's to get him, if he's around that long. Dennard's coverage skills and his consistent 2013 season give him the edge here over

[OSU's Bradley Roby](#)

...no slouch in his own right.

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Ohio State Buckeyes player #45 running with the ball.



Ohio State Buckeyes player #20 running with the ball.



Ohio State Buckeyes player #8 running with the ball.



Ohio State Buckeyes player #10 running with the ball.



[Dan's OSU L@gs and Resources](#)