

Meet the Class of 2008

Written by {ga=furls}

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The Ohio State Buckeyes officially added 19 new players yesterday on national signing day, and still have very lofty hopes for a high profile 20th player to be added to this class. The Buckeyes landed the two top inside linebacker prospects, three of the top eight left tackles, and still hope to land #1 overall recruit Terrelle Pryor. And who other but Furls to return to the front page to make sense of it all for us?



The recruiting sites will rank this year's Ohio State class as a good one, but not an elite one. Based on their insane model, which is basically a system that counts total stars, Ohio State's class never really had a shot of breaking the top three although it is very talented and very diverse. Ohio State's nineteen recruits with a pretty decent shot at adding a twentieth, is significantly smaller than those ranked ahead of it. In short, recruiting rankings are based largely on quantity, and Coach Tressel has shown over his tenure that 18-22 is going to be the norm at Ohio State.

Diversity is the key and the Buckeyes class of 2008 is nearly a complete football team. The Buckeyes brought in three top tier offensive linemen, a handful of defensive linemen, a kicker/punter, a couple of tight ends, some linebackers, and they even landed a five star equipment manager out of Detroit!

The 2008 Buckeyes return nearly everyone, so there will not be a lot of opportunity for the new class to make a huge splash, but there are some very talented playmakers to keep an eye on.

The Offensive Line: Ohio State's underrated prize of the 2008 recruiting class. Recruiting sites and fans get excited over 40 times and game film, but a team is not built around track speed, field vision, and cutbacks; it is built up front, and no one did a better job upfront than Ohio State.

The Buckeyes added the very best offensive linemen from three of the top football states in the nation in Adams, Brewster, and Shugarts. Mike Adams, tackle from Ohio, has the best natural ability and is the most fluent athlete of the group. He projects as the successor to Alex Boone at left tackle and may make an immediate impact at right tackle as early as next year. Not to be undone, J.B. Shugarts, appears to be ready to replace Barton as the best press interview on the team. During his signing day interview Shugarts told Buckeye fans to brace themselves for multiple national titles, pretty bold statement from a freshman.

Michael Brewster, standout from Florida, appears to be the vocal leader of this year's group which is a very convenient because at mere 6'5" 290-295 pounds he is the "runt" of the litter and projects as the Buckeyes next center where he will be leading this offensive line. This class is as much Brewster's as it is Tressel's. Brewster has been a vocal and tireless recruiter for the 2008 class, so much so that I personally think that if Terrelle Pryor comes to Ohio State it will be largely based on the relationship he has forged with Brewster and this year's class.

Defense: The line had to be the priority with upcoming vacancies at defensive end and a chronic lack of depth at the tackle position, Ohio State need to come up big on the other side of the trenches and they did pretty well.

Garrett Goebel is probably the prize of the defensive line class. Although he played defensive end in high school and is a bit undersized at 265 pounds, Goebel will almost certainly put on some weight and move to tackle. Goebel, like Larimore and Anderson before him, is a nationally ranked high school wrestler and will bring a wrestler's intuitive feel for leverage and hand speed to the defensive line.

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In Mobley, Wells, and Williams Ohio State has landed a versatile group of defensive ends. Mobley at 6'4 260 pounds is a throwback to the monster defensive ends that no longer appear to be en vogue in the NCAA. Wells is rather undersized at 210-220 pounds and will need to add some serious size to compete at defensive end. I look for Wells to redshirt and get on the five meal per day plan for the next year or two. Nathan Williams is probably the most polished athlete of the bunch, but has spent the majority of his high school career playing OLB, not defensive end.

The linebackers officially stole the show on the defensive side of the ball. Etienne Sabino, potentially Ohio State's best overall recruit in the 2008 class, has the power and strength to play ILB and the speed to play OLB. It will be very interesting to see where Sabino ends up. If there was one jersey I would tell fans to get now, it is this one. You will thank me in two years.

Andrew Sweat will not get a lot of press because of Sabino, but he may just be the AJ Hawk of this class. Sweat plays like a heat-seeking missile; he fires out on his initial read, seeks his target through the traffic, and explodes on impact. I predict that Sweat will end up at inside linebacker although he has the speed to play outside.

The secondary did not get as much help as many had hoped as the Buckeyes narrowly missed out on Brandon Harris, but the Buckeyes were able to land Sabino's high school teammate, Travis Howard. Howard is one of the top corners in this year's recruiting class and will bring speed and athleticism to the outside. He is a true cover corner and has all the requisite skills. He is probably Ohio State's best corner prospect since Youboty, the question is will he be able to capitalize on his physical tools and build the skills necessary to succeed in elite division one football.

The Receivers: Coach Tressel answered one of the lingering questions about this year's class in his signing day press conference. Tressel said that he had three receivers in this year's class which implies that Jake Stonebrunner even at

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6'5 225 pounds will likely move to the outside. There is no question that he has the speed to get it done out there, and I am sure that he will require a lot of special attention from future defenses. What do you use to defend a receiver with that size in college?

DeVier Posey is the most polished in this year's wide receiver crop and while he is an impressive playmaker, he does not have Ted Ginn's vertical speed. Posey will become someone's favorite target in 2009, and could see immediate playtime in 2008. He runs crisp, clean routes, and has terrific hands.

Terrelle Pryor: Will he? Won't he? May he? Maybe, but that was just the press conference to determine the date of his next press conference. It is pretty easy to get down on a high school kid with a microphone in his hand, let's face it, high school kids probably shouldn't be talking to anyone other than other high school kids (let alone the nation). For what it worth, the current rumor is that Pryor wants to go to Ohio State, but his family at least wants him to consider Penn State. I have no idea if this rumor has any basis in fact, but I do like it because it denies Rich Rodriguez the quarterback he needs for one more year.

It is always fun to root against Michigan's head coach, but in this case it is extra fun. I cannot remember ever seeing a sleazier fishmonger as DickRod, and I think it would be poetic justice for him to be an abysmal failure in Michigan. I would be pulling against him no matter where he went after what he did to WVU, going to Michigan just made it that much easier. Can you imagine DickRod 0-3 after falling to Ohio State in Ohio Stadium in 2010? Its easy if you try.