



Although the physical tools for any high school athlete are important to go on to the next level, the mental traits are just as vital and can make one stand out.

Alexandria Senior High tight end Shield Taylor is emerging as one of the top tight ends in Louisiana for the 2021 class, and the recruiting process has been heating up for him since February despite the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the world.

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Alexandria Senior High tight end Shield Taylor has 14 scholarship offers and a GPA of 4.3. (Photo: Submitted)

So far, Taylor has gained 14 offers ranging from in-state schools such as ULM and Northwestern State to Power 5 schools such as Stanford and Duke.

"It's definitely been different than what I imagined, but I have no complaints other than not being able to visit colleges," Taylor said. "(Other than that), it's been pretty nice."

At 6-foot-4 and 235 pounds, Taylor is not only a good blocker, but he made the most of his receiving opportunities with five catches for 74 yards and a touchdown this season.

In February, ULM was the first school to offer Taylor and everything has escalated from there.

"I was surprised," Taylor said. "I was really shocked. (ULM assistant coach Scott Stoker) visited a week before and (Trojans coach Thomas Bachman) introduced me to him. We met and we talked a little bit, but an offer wasn't really on my mind. But he texted Coach Bachman and said that they'd like to offer me. Coach Bachman called me down and gave me a big hug and said that and I called Coach Stoker and we talked about everything."

The first-team All-District 2-5A first-teamer is not only getting it done on the gridiron, but in the classroom as well with a 4.3 GPA.

This has attracted a lot of strong academic programs such as Stanford, Duke, Cornell and Dartmouth — all of which have offered him in the previous month. Taylor credits his success in the classroom to his teachers

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"The teachers at ASH want you to succeed as much as you do," Taylor said. "They usually say, 'You reap what you sow.' Even the study halls, we have coaches that help us with homework or call down teachers to help us. They really push academics just as much, if not more, than athletics because they preach that we're student-athletes and not just athletes. Student comes before athlete."

With ASH having back-to-back seasons of reaching the Class 5A regionals, the hope is to build upon that success with pieces such as Taylor, quarterback Judd Barton and linebacker Jermaine McNeal.

While the coronavirus pandemic has halted organized practices, Taylor is still finding the time to get better.

"I've been training at my house at my weight room in the garage," Taylor said. "I've been working out there and I throw the football with either my brother or get together with one of my friends. I'll study for the ACT and make sure that I'm doing all my classes online. One of the main things is just keeping in contact with my coaches and teammates, because that's always big. We all have the same goal and we like to achieve that goal, so it's just accountability with each other."