

# 2023 NFL Draft: C.J. Stroud Selected No. 2 Overall By The Houston Texans



Former Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud was selected by the Houston Texas with the No. 2 overall selection in the 2023 NFL Draft on Thursday, becoming the highest-selected quarterback in program history.

He's headed to Houston 📍@CJ7STROUD x @HoustonTexans pic.twitter.com/QhP2vISc1v

— Ohio State Football (@OhioStateFB) April 28, 2023

Stroud will join the Texans after two record-breaking seasons as the starter for Ohio State. He is a two-time Heisman Trophy finalist and ranks second in program history in passing yards (8,123), passing touchdowns (85) and completion percentage (69.3), also holding the program record for most games (three) with six touchdown passes.

While at one point viewed as the favorite to go with the first overall pick to the Carolina Panthers after a large contingent from the organization were on hand for Ohio State's pro day, Stroud was instead the second quarterback off the board, taken behind Alabama's Bryce Young, who went with the top pick.

"I'm willing to go anywhere to bring a Super Bowl or whatever the case may be," Stroud said after his pro day. "Just be myself, man. I don't want to put a ceiling or anything on anything. But whatever happens happens, and whatever team I go to, man, I'll be blessed to go there."

Stroud committed to Ohio State as a four-star prospect out of Inland Empire (Calif.) Rancho Cucamonga in the 2020 recruiting class, with a chance to sit and learn behind quarterback Justin Fields during Stroud's true freshman season. Stroud saw the field for just eight snaps but made the most of it, taking his first career play from scrimmage - a rushing attempt - 49 yards to the house against Michigan State.

Once Fields departed for the NFL Draft, Stroud won Ohio State's quarterback competition and was in position to fill the shoes left by the likes of Haskins and Fields over the last several seasons, looking to continue a high level of quarterback play for the Buckeyes and head coach Ryan Day.

Stroud's career as a starter got off to an up-and-down beginning, though. After throwing for four touchdowns against Minnesota in his first career start, Stroud's first start at Ohio Stadium against Oregon ended in defeat, and he finished just 15-of-25 passing for 185 yards, a touchdown and an interception in Ohio State's next game against Tulsa.

He sat out the next game against Akron, offering a chance for true freshman Kyle McCord to start, but once Stroud returned to the starting lineup for the Buckeyes, he never looked back. He passed for at least 250 yards in every game the remainder of the season and was intercepted just three times, totaling the number of interceptions he had across his first three starts.

One of Stroud's best performances capped off the season, when he threw for a program-record 573 yards and six touchdowns in a comeback win against Utah in the Rose Bowl. That strong play continued into this past season, and though the Buckeyes suffered a loss to Georgia in the College Football Playoff semifinals, Stroud still put up an impressive 348-yard outing with four touchdowns against the vaunted defense of the Bulldogs.

After his second season as the starter concluded, Stroud faced a decision. He could depart for the NFL and likely become one of the top quarterbacks off the board or return to Ohio State for another season in search of a Big Ten Championship and win over Michigan, two things that eluded Stroud during his time as the starter. Though Stroud ultimately departed Ohio State, the decision was closer than most would have believed.

"I was honestly going to come back to school," Stroud said at the NFL Scouting Combine. "It was really hard for me to leave a place like Ohio State, where it takes time to get to where I was at. It takes a lot of homework, a lot of trust and a lot of building camaraderie off the field. That's something you can't throw in the trash right away. I don't feel like I did that. Coming to the league was a smart decision for me, but it was really hard."

The Draft Network's Joe Marino wrote that the positives for Stroud included his accuracy, passing instincts and his production over his two seasons with the Buckeyes, but that his consistency under pressure remains a focus entering the next stage of his career.

"Stroud profiles as an NFL starting quarterback that is worthy of a first-round investment," Marino wrote. "His game is still evolving, which creates excitement for what can continue to be unlocked at the next level with the right infrastructure around him to reach his full potential."

Stroud is the fifth Ohio State quarterback to be selected in the first round, joining Don Scott (No. 9 in 1941), Art Schlichter (No. 4 in 1982), Dwayne Haskins (No. 15 in 2019) and Fields (No. 11 in 2021), and is the third in the last five years.