

2023 NFL Draft: Jaxon Smith-Njigba Selected No. 20 Overall By The Seattle Seahawks



Former Ohio State wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba was selected by the Seattle Seahawks with the No. 20 pick in the first round of the 2023 NFL Draft on Thursday, the first wideout off the board in this year's draft.

He was the third Buckeye off the board behind quarterback C.J. Stroud, who went No. 2 to the Houston Texans, and offensive tackle Paris Johnson Jr., who was drafted No. 6 overall by the Arizona Cardinals.

Smith-Njigba is the third Ohio State wideout to come off the board in the first round across the past two drafts, with New York Jets pass catcher Garrett Wilson and New Orleans Saints receiver Chris Olave going 10th and 11th, respectively, in last year's draft. Prior to that the Buckeyes didn't have a wide receiver taken in the first round since Ted Ginn Jr. and Anthony Gonzalez both went in the opening round in 2007.

A five-star recruit out of Rockwall, Texas, Smith-Njigba broke the Ohio State single-season school records for both receptions in yards in 2021, hauling in 95 passes for 1,606 yards and nine touchdowns.

It all culminated in a 15-catch, 347-yard, three-touchdown performance in the Rose Bowl against Utah. That yardage total is the most by a receiver in a bowl game in NCAA history, and also a single-game Ohio State school record. His 15 catches that day were also a school record.

Entering this past season with massive expectations, Smith-Njigba injured his hamstring on the Buckeyes' first possession against Notre Dame and appeared in just three games the entire season, finishing with five receptions for 43 yards.

The Draft Network's Joe Marino gave Smith-Njigba a second-round grade, praising his route-running, ball skills, hands and body control while holding concerns for his ability to win on the outside and a "lack of explosiveness."

“Smith-Njigba is an outstanding route-runner and separator where his deceptive footwork, body control, ability to read leverage, make sight adjustments, and run to open space made him consistently available for C.J. Stroud to work him the football in 2021,” Marino said. “He’s an extremely intelligent player with exceptional spatial awareness. He does well to continue working in scramble situations and he’s always competing to get open.

“Smith-Njigba has exceptional hands, ball skills, and focus at the catch point. He is decisive after the catch with excellent field vision. Everything Smith-Njigba does on the field is smooth, focused, and technically refined.”