

Four Buckeyes Featured In First Round Of Latest ESPN Mock Draft



With several starters returning and the team dipping into the transfer portal to find top talent at other schools, Ohio State's 2024 roster is filled with NFL-ready talent., many of whom are ready to hear their names called early on in next year's draft.

That reality was reflected in ESPN NFL draft analyst Matt Miller's latest mock draft, which had four Buckeyes drafted in the first round of next year's draft held at historic Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisc., the most by any team.

The first Buckeye taken in Miller's mock draft — which had Georgia quarterback Carson Beck selected by the New York Giants with the No. 1 overall pick — was senior defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau, who went No. 22 to the Atlanta Falcons.

Tuimoloau, a former five-star prospect out of Sammamish (Wa.) Eastside Catholic, was touted as a potential first-round draft prospect even early on in his Ohio State career, and he validated those high grades with a strong performance his junior season in Columbus.

He served as one of Ohio State's pass-rushing leaders all season, totaling 38 tackles (seven tackles for loss), a team-high six quarterback hurries, five sacks, two pass breakups and a fumble recovery, while also earning first-team All-Big Ten honors.

Next to appear on the mock draft behind Tuimoloau was defensive tackle Tyleik Williams, who went two picks later to the Green Bay Packers at pick No. 24. Williams has seen his draft stock skyrocket after a stellar junior season in 2023. He was a dominant force on the inside for the Buckeyes this past season, bursting on the scene with 53 tackles (10 for loss), five pass breakups, three sacks and a fumble recovery for a touchdown in 13 games.

Tuimoloau and Williams led the Buckeye representation in Miller's draft, but the analyst also had two offensive players featured, running back Quinshon Judkins and wide receiver Emeka Egbuka, who were slated as the No. 27 and No. 30 overall picks to the Dallas Cowboys and Detroit Lions, respectively.

Starting with Judkins, the Ole Miss transfer is in line to be one of Ohio State's most explosive offensive players this season after a strong first two years in the SEC. Judkins earned first-team All-SEC and SEC Freshman of the Year honors in 2022 after rushing for 1,567 yards and 16 touchdowns, the second-best ever rushing season by an SEC freshman behind Herschel Walker's 1,616 yards at Georgia in 1980. He followed up his strong first season with another productive year at Ole Miss in 2023, where he ranked second in the conference in carries (271) and rushing yards (1,158) and first in rushing touchdowns (15).

Egbuka, meanwhile, has already solidified himself as a premier pass catcher across his first three seasons at Ohio State. The former five-star prospect - who was projected by many as a top-10 pick last offseason - has totaled 124 catches for 1,857 receiving yards and 14 touchdowns with the Buckeyes. Egbuka saw his draft stock fall a bit this offseason after an injury-riddled 2023 campaign, but he can still rise up the rankings with a strong season as Ohio State's top wide receiver target this season.

Ohio State has yet to have four players selected in the first round of the NFL draft since 2016, when five Buckeyes were taken. The Buckeyes are also expected to see many other names — such as cornerback Denzel Burke, defensive end Jack Sawyer, running back TreVeyon Henderson and cornerback Jordan Hancock, among others — selected throughout next year's draft, putting them potentially on pace to threaten the record for most players taken from one school in a single draft, which was set by Georgia with 15 in 2022.