

Johnson Looking To Be First Offensive Tackle Taken



Former Ohio State offensive tackle Paris Johnson has a solitary ambition for the 2023 NFL Draft.

Coming off an All-American season at left tackle to cap a three-year career at Ohio State, Johnson wants to be the first offensive tackle selected in the draft. After participating in the NFL Scouting Combine this past weekend and going through the interview process with some teams, Johnson believes now is the time to prove that he's the best edge protector available.

"I feel like I've proven that in my film already," Johnson said during his interview session at the combine Saturday. "And at this time, it's me being able to show them in the interviews, being able to get on a board. I'm able to explain my technique, what went right, what went wrong, things I can improve on? What are the things, what's the mindset, how quick am I doing my memory?"

Some of Johnson's measurables could help make the case for him being the best offensive tackle prospect emerging for the 2023 NFL Draft. He measured in at the combine with a 6-6, 313-pound frame and 36 $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch arms.

On bench press he threw up 29 reps of 225 pounds, and his broad jump showcased some lower-body power by going 9 feet, 2 inches.

"It's awesome (to be on this stage)," Johnson said. "It's something that I've been working toward since I first picked Ohio State, to get developed and come to this spot."

Johnson's athleticism is seen as one of the more eye-popping attributes in his game by NFL draft experts. Exiting high school with five stars next to his name in the 247Sports composite, that pedigree has been present for a while.

"Long, athletic tackle in need of additional technique work but possessing the traits to become a long-time starter on the left side," NFL analyst Lance Zierlein said. "Johnson is still filling out his frame and he should get stronger. He's much better as a move blocker than man blocker but he can bridge that gap with more coaching. He's loose and quick in pass protection but will need to add core strength and get better with inside hands to prevent edge defenders from bypassing his anchor. Johnson's athletic tools and position versatility are advantageous but the going could be a little bumpy early on before he

settles in.”

“My athleticism, I feel like, is unmatched in the country,” Johnson said. “My ability to move my feet and cover my opponent — I’ve never played basketball because I can’t dribble, but my feet can cover anybody. That’s just how I feel. I don’t know if it’s because I grew up in church, a lot of dancing and whatnot but I feel like I have good feet, and I feel like the violence that I play with out in space is crucial.”

Johnson’s gotten some major help in his draft development process from former Cincinnati Bengals offensive tackle and four-time pro bowler Willie Anderson. Anderson’s been a big help to the technical side of Johnson’s game, he noted, especially with his hand placement.

“I’ve been working with Willie Anderson since I was a sophomore in high school,” Johnson said. “He’s like family to me. I hit him with all the questions I have about the game, about life, about the transition (to the next level).”

Johnson will find out whether a team believes he’s the best tackle available at the NFL Draft Thursday, April 27.