

NFL Draft Preview: Nine Buckeyes Hoping To Hear Names Called At 2024 NFL Draft



If Ohio State's collection of talent entering the NFL draft feels smaller than usual this year, thank the number of returning juniors and seniors — including cornerback Denzel Burke, defensive linemen Jack Sawyer, JT Tuimoloau and Tyleik Williams and running back TreVeyon Henderson, among others — that almost certainly would have heard their name called.

Instead, no more than five or six Buckeyes among nine draft eligible players are expected to be picked in the 2024 NFL Draft, scheduled to begin on Thursday in Detroit. Six draftees would match Ohio State's total in each of the last two drafts, while five would be the fewest since 2015. Leading the way for Ohio State is wide receiver Marvin Harrison Jr., a consensus top-five pick that is projected to land with the Arizona Cardinals at fourth overall, and be the first non-quarterback taken in the draft.

His presumed first-round selection will extend Ohio State's streak to three consecutive drafts with a first-round receiver, with Jaxon Smith-Njigba (20th, 2023), Chris Olave (11th, 2022) and Garrett Wilson (10th, 2022) also on that list. Furthermore, Ohio State will have had a first-round pick in every draft dating back to 2016. Expectations are high for Harrison. Many view him as one of the top two players in the draft along with USC quarterback Caleb Williams.

The next Buckeye projected to come off the board is defensive tackle Mike Hall Jr., viewed by most as either a second or third rounder. He was not able to participate in drills at the NFL Scouting Combine earlier this spring due to a hamstring injury, but he returned to the field for Ohio State's pro day on March 20. It was not an extensive showing, but it was an explosive one — also an apt description of Hall's three seasons at Ohio State, where he played in just 28 games but had 10 tackles for loss and six sacks while in and out of the lineup with injuries.

"Some teams say I'm undersized, some teams say I'm just right," Hall said. "But the biggest thing for me is how I separate myself with explosiveness."

Linebacker Tommy Eichenberg and tight end Cade Stover are then viewed as either third- or fourth-round selections. Both have plenty to work on as they make the jump to the next level — Eichenberg's

ability in coverage and Stover's blocking have both taken their share of criticism throughout the draft process — but their similar no-nonsense, all-football mentalities make it hard to believe they won't be competing for significant playing time as rookies.

"I'm here to tell you PPF or PFF, whatever the hell it is, they don't know my scheme," Stover said. "But yeah, (questions about blocking) seems to be a common theme here ... if you're afraid to miss, you're not going to get anything done. You're going to play passively."

The lone defensive back in the class for Ohio State, safety Josh Proctor could be taken anywhere from the fifth round on. His stock did not appear all that high entering this past season, after he was benched in 2022, but he turned in an impressive sixth year with the Buckeyes that put him on the radar.

And if there is a sixth draftee among Buckeyes that entered their name into the pool, Steele Chambers is most likely to hear his name called in either the sixth or seventh round. He had an up-and-down career with the Buckeyes, spending time at running back before ultimately making the switch to linebacker, and is viewed by many analysts as a work in progress as he prepares to play linebacker at the next level.

But Chambers' natural charisma — one he showed off during media sessions at Ohio State as well as at the combine — will likely endear him to teams, and could give him the chance to be drafted and make an NFL roster this fall. It is not out of the question, however, that Chambers falls out of the draft entirely given his late projection. Also viewed as potential undrafted free agents are offensive lineman Matthew Jones, wide receiver Xavier Johnson and running back Miyan Williams.

Chambers would likely be a priority free agent should he go undrafted, and the same can be said for Johnson. His versatility was obvious at Ohio State, able to step in as both a receiver and running back for the Buckeyes, but his value at the professional level will be his willingness to step in on special teams, something that can be the difference between making a roster or not.

The 2024 NFL Draft begins Thursday, with the first round set to be broadcast at 8 p.m. on ABC, ESPN and the NFL Network. The second and third rounds will follow on Friday beginning at 7 p.m., with rounds four through seven beginning at 12 p.m. on Saturday.