

Pro Football Focus Lists Stroud As CFB's Fourth-Best Quarterback For 2022



C.J. Stroud finished fourth in the Heisman Trophy voting as a redshirt freshman after a record-breaking season with the Buckeyes. His performances across 13 games have led many to expect even more from him in 2022.

The Ohio State quarterback will enter his second season as a starter this fall. He is the betting favorite to win the Heisman ahead of Alabama quarterback Bryce Young, who won the award over Michigan defensive end Aiden Hutchinson, Pittsburgh signal-caller Kenny Pickett and Stroud in 2021.

Despite what the folks in the desert think about Stroud, Pro Football Focus (PFF) has three other quarterbacks rated higher than him with a little more than six weeks until the regular season.

In PFF's college football preview magazine, Stroud is ranked as the No. 4 quarterback entering the 2022 season. He falls behind Young, Caleb Williams of Southern California and Spencer Rattler of South Carolina.

In 2021, Stroud completed 317 of 441 passes for 4,435 yards, 44 touchdowns and six interceptions in 12 games. He had the third-best completion percentage in the FBS at 71.9 percent, and his passing efficiency rating was second-best to Grayson McCall of Coastal Carolina at 186.56.

After the season, the Big Ten recognized the Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., native with its most distinguishable honors, including the Graham-George Offensive Player of the Year, Thompson-Randle El Freshman of the Year and the Griese-Brees Quarterback of the Year awards. He was also named a first-team all-conference member by the coaches and media.

Rightfully so, PFF ranks Stroud as the top-rated quarterback in the Big Ten ahead of Taulia Taulia Tagovailoa (No. 11), Purdue's Aidan O'Connell (No. 15), Michigan's Cade McNamara (No. 29), Minnesota's Tanner Morgan (No. 38) and Indiana quarterback Connor Bazelak.

Young completed 366 of 547 passes (66.9 percent) for 4,872 yards, 47 touchdowns and seven interceptions in 15 games. He won the Heisman Trophy and captured the Associated Press Player of the Year, the Maxwell Award, the Davey O'Brien Award and the Manning Award.

Williams emerged as Oklahoma's starter midway through the 2021 season, usurping Rattler for his role as the lead man. He completed 136 of 211 passes (64.5 percent) for 1,912 yards, 21 touchdowns and four interceptions while adding 442 yards and six scores with his legs. Williams earned second-team All-Big 12 honors from the media and All-Big 12 honorable mention by the league's coaches for his efforts.

Despite losing his starting job to Williams, Rattler still appeared in nine games for Oklahoma and completed 140 of 187 passes (74.9 percent) for 1,483 yards, 11 touchdowns and five interceptions. He entered the transfer portal after the season and landed with the Gamecocks in South Carolina, where he will have three years of eligibility remaining.

Stroud will return this season without first-round NFL talents Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave — both were taken No. 10 and No. 11 overall by the New York Jets and New Orleans Saints, respectively. However, he will have his top-receiving option Jaxon Smith-Njigba and rising talents Julian Fleming, Marvin Harrison Jr. and Emeka Egbuka.

Under fourth-year head coach Ryan Day, Stroud should take a step forward in 2022, looking to prove why he is the best quarterback in college football and a desirable option for NFL franchises in the future.