



# QUARTERBACKS SET TO TOP THE BOARD

# 2023 NFL DRAFT

Ralph Russo, the lead college football writer for The Associated Press, gives his take on the players to watch. He expects quarterbacks will dominate the top of the draft with offensive linemen being popular and possibly a record number of tight ends going in the first round.

## PLAYERS LIKELY TO GO FIRST

### Bryce Young

QB, 5-FOOT-10, 200 POUNDS, ALABAMA  
Breakdown: Poised leader and creative playmaker, who excels at buying time while seeing the entire field. Elite combination of football instincts and intelligence with a good arm, but, boy, is he small for an NFL quarterback.  
Fact: The national high school player of the year as a senior in California went on to become the 2021 Heisman Trophy winner as a sophomore with the Crimson Tide.  
Stats: Passed for 8,700 yards and 79 touchdowns in two seasons as a starter at Alabama.

### C.J. Stroud

QB, 6-FOOT-3, 214 POUNDS, OHIO STATE  
Breakdown: Elite accuracy and touch combined with good size and arm strength. He has above-average athleticism, but has seemed reluctant to use it at times. Can linger in the pocket and lock on receivers.  
Fact: Heisman Trophy finalist in each of his two seasons as a starter at Ohio State.  
Stats: Threw 85 touchdown passes to break a Big Ten record held by Drew Brees for most TD throws over two seasons.

### Anthony Richardson

QB, 6-FOOT-4, 244 POUNDS, FLORIDA  
Breakdown: Most intriguing prospect in the class, with Cam Newton-type size, athleticism and arm strength. Mechanics need work to fix his accuracy issues.  
Fact: As a high school recruit in Gainesville, Florida, he was featured in the Netflix documentary "QB1: Beyond the Lights."  
Stats: Richardson had 13 career starts and only 393 pass attempts in three seasons at Florida.

### Will Anderson

OLB, 6-FOOT-3, 253 POUNDS, ALABAMA  
Breakdown: Quick first-step pass rusher with moves and power who can dominate a game. Can quibble with his tackling and ability to finish against the run, but he's probably the best prospect regardless of position.  
Fact: The first player to win SEC defensive player of the year in consecutive seasons.  
Stats: Racked up 34 1/2 sacks and 62 tackles for loss in 41 games at Alabama.

### Jalen Carter

DT, 6-3, 313, GEORGIA  
Breakdown: A game-wrecking package of power and quickness who collapses pockets and splits double-teams. Only question appears to be about maturity and make-up.  
Fact: Pleaded no contest to two misdemeanors (reckless driving and racing) and sentenced to a year of probation and community service on charges related to an car accident that killed a Georgia teammate and staffer.  
Stats: Started 13 games out of 38 he played during his three seasons at Georgia.



## OFFENSE

### QUARTERBACKS

Position overview: Group with some question marks, but at least three of them (Young, Stroud, Richardson) will likely go in the top 10 and as many as five in the first round.

#### Will Levis, 6-4, 230, Kentucky

Prototypical size and athleticism, with a strong arm. Accuracy and decision-making were inconsistent, especially last season.

#### Hendon Hooker, 6-3, 217, Tennessee

Throws a top-notch deep ball and is an instinctive scrambler. Natural leader, but he is 25 years old, coming off a major knee injury and played in an offense that kept reads relatively simple.

### RUNNING BACKS

Position overview: One first-round talent and lots of debate over whether any should be a first rounder.

#### Bijan Robinson, 5-11, 215, Texas

Vision, burst, finishing power and reliable hands make Robinson one of the best running back prospects in the last decade. Will need to be more decisive in hitting holes in the NFL.

#### Jahmyr Gibbs, 5-9, 199, Alabama

Explosive and shifty runner, with excellent hands, but doesn't run with tackle-breaking power.

### WIDE RECEIVERS

Position overview: This receiver draft class lags behind recent ones that have produced a total of 17 first-rounders, with at least five in every draft. Under five first-rounders seems likely this year.

#### Jaxon Smith-Njigba, 6-1, 196, Ohio State

Smooth router runner. Great at tracking the passes through the air and catches just about anything that hits his hands. Lacks top-end speed and burst.

#### Jordan Addison, 5-11, 173, Southern California

Creates separation with a combination of quickness and burst out of breaks, but he is undersized and that could limit him to the slot.

#### Zay Flowers, 5-9, 182, Boston College

Plays fast and runs aggressive after the catch for an undersized receiver. Needs to improve consistency with his hands.

#### Quentin Johnston, 6-3, 208, TCU

Big, fast and strong. Looks the part, but

injuries and inconsistencies held back his production.

#### Jalin Hyatt, 6-0, 176, Tennessee

Blazing-speed deep threat with reliable hands, but is there more to his game?

### TIGHT ENDS

Position overview: The record for tight ends drafted in the first round is three, last done in 2017. There is a chance that gets broken and more tight ends go in the first round than wideouts.

#### Michael Mayer, 6-4, 249, Notre Dame

Big, reliable target who always seems to get open, even when he is the focus of the defense. Better before the catch than after.

#### Dalton Kincaid, 6-3 1/2, 246, Utah

Agile athlete with excellent body control, good hands and quick feet to avoid tacklers. Needs to refine routes and gain strength.

#### Darnell Washington, 6-7, 265, Georgia

Massive and well-built athlete who played over 270 pounds and was like having an extra tackle on the field, capable of catching passes. But that part of his game will need refinement.

### OFFENSIVE TACKLES

Position outlook: No top-10 locks, but there might be as many as five potential first-rounders in this group if teams are OK with possibly taking a player who might be better suited for right tackle than left. Or maybe guard.

#### Peter Skoronski, 6-4, 313, Northwestern

Explodes off the line with power and balance, with the ability to lock up defenders in the running game. Legit concerns about whether he has the length to stay at tackle at the next level.

#### Paris Johnson Jr., 6-6, 313, Ohio State

Ideal size and athleticism, with some work to be done on technique and footwork.

#### Broderick Jones, 6-5, 311, Georgia

Excellent athlete (former high school basketball player) who has some questions about his build being ideal to play tackle in the NFL.

### INTERIOR LINEMAN

Position outlook: A couple of high-floor players could sneak into the first round, based on need.

#### John Michael Schmitz(C), 6-3, 305, Minnesota

Strong, tough and durable. Lacks foot quickness.

#### O'Cyrus Torrence(G), 6-5, 330, Florida

Long arms, strong hands and a ton of experience. Not the most athletic, which could limit him as a pulling guard.

## DEFENSE

### EDGE RUSHERS

Position overview: Another good year for edge rusher depth. A few appealing prospects are likely to slip out of the first round.

#### Tyree Wilson, 6-5, 271, Texas Tech

Ideal frame with long arms and room to comfortably add more pounds. Improved technique and footwork could unlock and even more fierce pass rusher.

#### Lukas Van Ness, 6-5, 270, Iowa

Powerful player who has been used both inside and outside on the defensive line, but still relatively raw and inconsistently productive player.

#### Nolan Smith, 6-2, 238, Georgia

Fast (4.39-second in the 40) and agile athlete who scores high marks as a team leader. The production never really matched the traits.

#### Keion White, 6-5, 285, Georgia Tech

Big, high-energy player who has not fully tapped into his pass-rushing potential.

### DEFENSIVE TACKLES

Position overview: One sure first-rounder (Jalen Carter), a few more who could get consideration and then a drop off.

#### Bryan Bresee, 6-5, 298, Clemson

Stout and powerful with good burst. Injuries, illness and a family tragedy (his younger sister died of cancer during last season) made for a challenging college career. The best could be yet to come.

#### Calijah Kancey, 6-1, 281, Pittsburgh

Undersized, but active and quick interior lineman. Kancey is no Aaron Donald, who came out of Pitt with a similar scouting report, but he's disruptive.

#### Mazi Smith, 6-3, 323, Michigan

Crazy strong and athletic for his size, but it hasn't translated to pass rushing skills.

### LINEBACKERS

Position overview: Linebackers are becoming the running backs of defense, with draft value in decline.

#### Drew Sanders, 6-4, 235, Arkansas

Disruptive pass rush and rangy player, who tended to shoot gaps and was not a consistent tackler.

#### Jack Campbell, 6-4, 249, Iowa

Big and active run stuffer who will have to show more in coverage or as a pass rusher to

become a three-down player in the NFL. There is potential for that.

### CORNERBACKS

Position overview: Pencil in three first-rounders and a few others who could jump into the back end of Day 1.

#### Devon Witherspoon, 5-11, 181, Illinois

Aggressive, disruptive and physical player who took a huge leap as a senior to become one of the best defensive players in the country. Maybe a little too aggressive, especially at that size.

#### Christian Gonzalez, 6-1, 197, Oregon

Long and fast (4.38 in the 40) cornerback who became more of a playmaker last season with four interceptions and 11 passes defended.

#### Joey Porter Jr., 6-2, 192, Penn State

Big, strong and physical corner with long arms. His style draws some flags and he needs work supporting the run.

#### Deonte Banks, 6-0, 197, Maryland

Another physical corner who likes to mix it up with receivers and get involved against the run, but a little finesse might help him in coverage.

#### Emmanuel Forbes, 6-1, 166, Mississippi State

Elite ball skills in long and very slender frame.

#### D.J. Turner, 5-11, 178, Michigan

Maybe the fastest player in the draft, but needs to play stronger.

#### Clark Phillips III, 5-9, 184, Utah

The measurements don't stand out, but he's a tenacious competitor who makes a lot of plays.

### SAFETIES

Position overview: Solid chance no safeties are selected in the first round.

#### Brian Branch, 5-11, 190, Alabama

Versatile defensive back with coverage skills that could make him a valuable slot cornerback and size that might limit his effectiveness in run support.

### SPECIALISTS

Position overview: The few kickers and punters that will be drafted likely won't come until Day 3 (rounds 4-7).

#### Jake Moody, K, 6-0, 210, Michigan

Chad Ryland, K, 5-11, 190, Maryland

Bryce Baringer, P, 6-1, 220, Michigan State

Adam Korsak, P, 6-0, 190, Rutgers