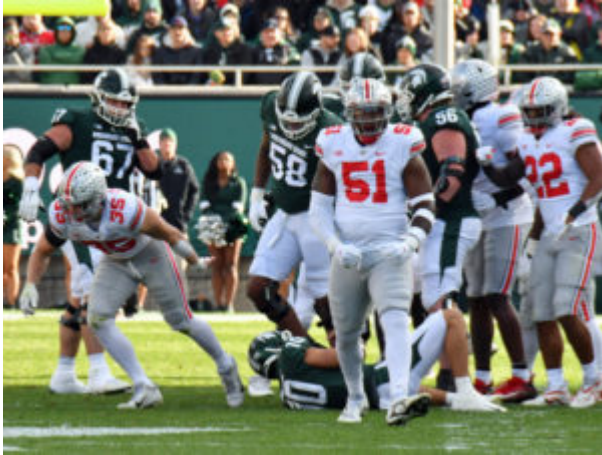


2024 NFL Draft: Former Ohio State Defensive Tackle Mike Hall Jr. Selected No. 54 Overall By The Cleveland Browns



Former Ohio State defensive tackle Michael Hall Jr. is staying in the Buckeye state, as he was selected by the Cleveland Browns in the second round of the 2024 NFL Draft on Friday, going as the No. 54 overall pick. Hall is Ohio State's first defensive player taken in this year's draft and the second Buckeye overall to be selected.

Hall joined Ohio State in 2021 as a four-star defensive lineman out of Streetsboro, Ohio, where he was touted as the nation's 53rd-best prospect, 10th-best defensive lineman and the No. 2 overall player from Ohio. Entering the program alongside a loaded 2021 recruiting class and with a number of established defensive lineman already on the roster, Hall struggled to see the field as a freshman, appearing in just four games in 2021 and ultimately gaining a redshirt.

With Buckeye rushmen such as Jeron Cage and Haskell Garrett departing from the program that offseason, Hall took a notable leap in his development as a redshirt freshman in 2022, emerging as one of the team's better pass rushers with a tied-for-team-high 4.5 sacks along with 19 tackles and 7.5 tackles for loss across 12 games. His most notable game in 2022 occurred in the team's season-opening win over Notre Dame, where he racked up four tackles, two tackles for loss and a sack.

Hall's production that season only came in spurts, however, as he dealt with a nagging shoulder injury that limited his movement and explosiveness, especially towards the end of the year. He saw 19 or fewer snaps in each of the final five games of the year, a span where he totaled just three tackles and failed to record a tackle for loss or sack.

"I wouldn't say (the injury was) severe, but it bothered him," defensive line coach Larry Johnson said in March of 2023. "When you're playing inside and you have a shoulder injury, you can't lock out. So now you're playing with one arm. That's tough to do to play the run. And it affected him. There's no question about it. It affected him mentally."

After an offseason full of recovery and rehab, Hall declared he was fully healthy from the injury before his redshirt sophomore campaign, and that health showed across the 2023 season. Slotted in as a full-

time starter at defensive tackle alongside Tyleik Williams and defensive ends Jack Sawyer and J.T. Tuimoloau, Hall totaled a career-high 24 tackles along with two tackles for loss, 1.5 sacks and two quarterback hurries, missing just one game due to injury against Minnesota in November. These efforts earned him third-team All-Big Ten honors.

Although his stats may not flash on paper, his ability to stay on the field for the majority of the season and serve as a more consistent force in the trenches intrigued those in the NFL world, prompting Hall to declare for the draft on Dec. 30, just one day after Ohio State's Cotton Bowl loss to Missouri.

Hall's draft stock then began to shoot up after his strong performance at the 2024 Senior Bowl practices held from Jan. 30-Feb.1, where he was named the event's top practice performer at his position by the offensive lineman who lined up against him after turning heads with his pass-rushing ability.

"If you squinted during practices this week and looked at No. 51 for the National team, you might have had flashbacks to when Aaron Donald was at the Senior Bowl in 2014," ESPN NFL Draft Analyst Hall wrote after the Senior Bowl. "Hall is a smaller defensive tackle at 6-foot-2 and 280 pounds, but his burst off the line is stunning. He routinely beat blockers off the ball and was a blur through the gaps. Hall's lack of size will hold him back on certain team boards, but as a penetrator, he had no peer at the Senior Bowl."

Hall continued to generate buzz with another solid outing at Ohio State's pro day on March 30, and all that momentum paid off for him on Friday when he was selected in the second round of the draft, becoming the highest-drafted defensive lineman for the Buckeyes since Nick Bosa went No. 2 overall in the 2019 draft.

Now, Hall will look to serve as a more consistent force in the interior on a Browns' defense that already boasts one of the top defensive lines in the NFL, led by 2024 defensive player of the year Myles Garrett and Za'Darius Smith.