

C.J. Stroud Made “Really Hard” Decision To Leave Ohio State



It was an intriguing few days back in January when Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud had yet to announce his intentions to enter his name into the NFL Draft, even when it appeared the decision was all but a formality.

Stroud did eventually make that announcement, officially ending his Ohio State career after three years in Columbus and two seasons as a starter, but he said on Friday at the NFL Scouting Combine that the decision to either leave or return was closer than most imagined.

“I was honestly going to come back to school,” Stroud said. “It was really hard for me to leave a place like Ohio State, where it takes time to get to where I was at. It takes a lot of homework, a lot of trust and a lot of building camaraderie off the field. That’s something you can’t throw in the trash right away. I don’t feel like I did that. Coming to the league was a smart decision for me, but it was really hard.”

Stroud, a two-time Heisman Trophy finalist, left with his name displayed throughout Ohio State’s record books, finishing second in school history in passing yards (8,123), passing touchdowns (85) and completion percentage (69.3) while twice winning Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year.

What Ohio State was not able to accomplish in Stroud’s two seasons as a starter, though, was knocking off Michigan, winning the Big Ten or winning a national title, and those factors all led to Stroud considering a return to the Buckeyes.

“Not beating That Team Up North, not winning a national championship. Those were two goals of mine,” he said. “And then, of course, not winning the Heisman was, I feel, because of those losses. That kind of hurts. I feel like I could have won two Heismans back-to-back if I were to win those two games (against Michigan).”

Despite the disappointment of not achieving those goals, Stroud is excited to look forward at what the NFL has to offer for him while approaching a new set of goals at the next level wherever he lands.

“At the end of the day, man, it’s a part of God’s plan, and I don’t question that,” he said. “It put a little more fire on me, another chip on my shoulder. I’m excited to go to the league and do better things than that because that wasn’t in God’s plan, so let’s see what the league has for me now.”

Stroud will work out at the NFL Scouting Combine on Friday ahead of the NFL Draft in April, where is expected to be a top-10 pick and is in contention to be the first quarterback off the board.