

Former Ohio State OT Taylor Decker Receives 6-Year, \$85 Million Contract Extension From Lions



Former Ohio State left tackle Taylor Decker agreed to a multiyear extension with the Detroit Lions worth \$85 million across six years, with \$37.5 million fully guaranteed.

The Lions drafted Decker with the No. 16 overall pick in the 2016 draft. The Vandalia, Ohio, native began working with the first team during his first week of practice, and the 6-foot-7, 318-pound tackle has started on the blindside of quarterback Matthew Stafford since.

A 2015 consensus All-American, Decker had said that he had initial conversations with the team about an extension in August, but he did not know what to expect, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic. Decker was set to play the 2020 season on his fifth-year option, and when Buckeye Sports Bulletin spoke with The Athletic's Chris Burke, the Lions expert said he expected Detroit to extend the tackle's contract.

The former Big Ten Offensive Lineman of the Year started all 55 games he played in for the Lions since being drafted in 2016. Decker has one career reception to his name, which was an 11-yard touchdown in Week 17 of the 2018 season.

Lions head coach Matt Patricia views Decker as a foundational piece to the team and that his extension is part of the "first wave" of re-signings that might happen sooner than later. Standout wide receiver Kenny Golladay and kicker Matt Prater are expected to be extended, as well as offensive lineman Frank Ragnow and potentially wideout Marvin Jones and safety Duron Harmon.

"The foundation. We're just getting to that point," Patricia said. "I think Taylor is a great example of that, of a guy that has been drafted to play here, that has developed and has gotten better, that has been everything that we want to be about. And you want to keep those guys as you raise them and as you develop them and watch them grow. It's impossible to build a team through roster changes and free agency every year. You just can't do it. Financially, it's impossible."

The healthy contract extension will lock Decker into the Lions' future farther than any other player, which lends to Patricia's vision of Decker as a franchise cornerstone. A vocal leader of the team, the 27-

year-old former Buckeye represented Detroit as a leader when the team spoke publicly at the team's protest of the shooting of Jacob Blake on Aug. 27.

"We've been able to have some real conversations as a team. Just to hear the pain, the fear that the people I love are going through, it's not OK," Decker said. "Hearing the pain in the voices of guys that I care about, guys that I love, guys that are great men, great husbands, great fathers, they shouldn't have to go through that. And I want them to know that I'm here for them."

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