

Former Ohio State Quarterback C.J. Stroud Steps Into Franchise Quarterback Role With Houston Texans



Throughout the pre-draft process, speculation on where former Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud would land was rampant.

Stroud saw his perceived draft stock fluctuate throughout the months between Ohio State's Peach Bowl loss to Georgia and the opening round of the NFL Draft on Thursday, but he found his new home just minutes into the draft. With the No. 2 overall selection, the Houston Texans decided to make Stroud their quarterback of the future, sending him to tears as he saw his NFL dreams realized.

"I know that it's meant to be," Stroud said after the draft. "I know that with this franchise, it's going to be something that I'm really going to take very, very seriously and I'm going to work my tail off to get some wins."

It was a long road to the NFL for Stroud. He battled through several hardships during his upbringing, including the incarceration of his father as well as economic difficulties which caused him and his family to live above the storage facility in which his mother worked. But, Stroud persevered through that, using football as an outlet while growing into one of the nation's best high school quarterbacks.

"I think I'm battle-tested," Stroud said. "I think God has put a lot of trials and tribulations in my life and they're not for no reason. It's to lead people to him and get me ready for what I have to go through. I wear the armor of God and I'm scarred up, but that's what you want. You want somebody who has been through adversity and somebody who will persevere through issues.

"I'm not really worried about the talk. People are going to talk good, bad, ugly, sad. I'm just going to continue to be myself and be a man of God."

Stroud's determination led him to Ohio State, where he blossomed into one of the nation's best quarterbacks. A two-time Heisman Trophy finalist, Stroud amassed 8,123 passing yards and 85 touchdowns — both of which rank second in Ohio State history, behind only J.T. Barrett — while his 575 completions also sit second behind Barrett, who appeared in 24 more games than Stroud. He was named the Big Ten's Offensive Player of the Year and Quarterback of the Year twice, as well.

While Stroud's talent is unquestioned, he enters a difficult situation in Houston. The Texans have endured three consecutive losing seasons, going 11-38-1 across that span. Houston also dealt Brandin Cooks, the Texans' leading receiver each of those seasons, to the Dallas Cowboys this offseason, leaving Stroud with a questionable blend of pass-catchers — a group that includes former Buckeye Noah Brown, Robert Woods, John Metchie III and Nico Collins — during his first season with the organization.

"Everything I've been through has not been for no reason," Stroud said. "It was to get to a team like this and try and flip it around and do the best I can."

Although the burden of being a franchise quarterback is heavy, Stroud isn't worried in the slightest that he will live up to expectations.

"I don't believe in pressure," he said. "I think you either do it or you don't."