

Eyioma Uwazurike NFL Draft 2022: Scouting Report for Denver Broncos' DL

By Staff

BleacherReport.com

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HEIGHT: 6'6 1/8"

WEIGHT: 316

HAND: 10 1/8"

ARM: 35 1/8"

WINGSPAN: 7'0 3/4"

40-YARD DASH: DNP

3-CONE: DNP

SHUTTLE: DNP

VERTICAL: 33"

BROAD: 8'11"

POSITIVES

- Tall, thick build with great arm length. Could fit all over the defensive front.
- Strong punch. Can knock OL back with relative ease if he gets a clean strike.
- Great lateral movement for his size. Can slide through gaps and work across the line of scrimmage comfortably.
- Good movement skills in space. Can finish plays in the backfield.
- Above-average eyes and discipline. Does well to play with correct leverage and gap integrity.

NEGATIVES

- Slow off the ball. Will not be one to overwhelm offensive linemen out of the gate.
- Struggles to settle and anchor. Has some issues finding his base after moving around.
- Tends to lean and lunge to initiate contact. Gets himself off-balance.

— Not a polished pass-rusher at this stage. Has the athletic potential to get there, but will need time and quality coaching.

2021 STATISTICS

13 G, 43 TOT, 12 TFL, 9 SK, 1 PD

NOTES

- 3-star recruit in 2016. Came out of high school listed at only 250 pounds.
- Four-year starter.
- Six-year player who played on the added year of eligibility granted due to COVID-19.
- 2021 first-team All-Big 12.

OVERALL

Eyioma Uwazurike is built like a nose guard, but he projects to handle a different role in the NFL.

Despite a massive 6'6" and 320-pound frame, Uwazurike wins primarily with his movement skills. He does not fire off the ball particularly well, which is tough to square with his quality jump testing at the NFL combine, but the rest of his athletic profile looks good on film.

Uwazurike flows comfortably across the line of scrimmage and has plenty of stop/start change of direction ability for a player his size. Whenever he gets free in space, he often has the speed and agility to finish plays. Those skills rarely translate to his pass-rushing reps, unfortunately, but the potential is there.

Uwazurike's anchor complicates his run defense profile. Though he strikes well with his hands and can overwhelm blockers that way, his lower body too often fails him. Uwazurike's base often gets out of whack, leading him to either lunge when he goes to strike or get completely knocked off-balance when offensive linemen latch onto him. That is likely part of why he did not primarily play over the center at Iowa State despite his frame.

Uwazurike is best when allowed to play on or over the tackle, which means he needs a base 3-4 front that will allow him to do so. He needs to work on being able to settle and anchor as well as find a pass-rushing play before moving into a starting role, but he has enough athleticism and run-defense savvy to find a rotational role within his first few years.

GRADE: 6.1 (High-level Developmental Prospect - 5th Round)

OVERALL RANK: 214

POSITION RANK: DL22

PRO COMPARISON: Bigger Christian Covington

Draft Talk: Analysts share thoughts on Eyiona Uwazurike

By Matt Belinson
Iowa State Daily
April 15, 2022

Editor's note: The 2022 NFL Draft is on its way (April 28), and it's shaping up to be an unprecedented stage for Cyclone football.

The Iowa State Daily spoke with five NFL Draft analysts to get their opinions on the Cyclones' biggest draft prospects and examine their respective strengths, weaknesses and pro potential.

The analysts are: Dane Brugler (The Athletic), Chris Trapasso (CBSSports), Anthony Treash (Pro Football Focus), Lance Zierlein (NFL.com) and Keith Sanchez (The Draft Network).

Eyiona Uwazurike took a big step forward on Iowa State's defensive line in terms of production in 2021 and put himself on draft boards and in relatively good favor with draft analysts.

Uwazurike checked in at 6-feet, 6 inches and 316 pounds at the NFL Combine and ran a 5.32 40-yard dash at Pro Day.

Analysts like Uwazurike for his size, power and ability to be disruptive in multiple spots on the field.

So, what does his NFL potential look like in the mind of these evaluators?

For context, the highest selection for an Iowa State defensive lineman came in 1979 when the Tennessee Titans drafted Mike Stensrud in the second round, 31st overall.

What are Uwazurike's strengths?

Uwazurike's aforementioned size stands out first for draft analysts, along with his positional flexibility along the defensive line.

His 2021 season stands out, with Uwazurike finishing his final season as a Cyclone with nine sacks and 12 tackles for loss.

He had six combined sacks in his previous three seasons.

"He was kind of an ascending guy," Brugler said. "Things really seemed to blossom for him this year."

On film, Uwazurike showed the ability to play the nose tackle position, along with being split out wide as a defensive end in certain fronts.

Brugler and others love Uwazurike's bull rush, long arms and knack to disrupt.

Trapasso took it a step further when it comes to Uwazurike's size and physical traits.

"I think Uwazurike is one of the most legitimately versatile linemen in the class," Trapasso said. "In terms of athleticism, he's longer than Jordan Davis."

His pass-rush moves are solid for Trapasso and could bring good closing speed. In addition, he showed polished skills on film.

Similar to Brugler, Treash said Uwazurike's 2021 season put a lot of teams and scouts on notice. Uwazurike can play in multiple alignments and Treash said a team will be able to plug him into multiple fronts and he will be comfortable.

"I think there's something to like there," Treash said. "He's got a massive frame. Very long arms. Very explosive dude."

Here are other overall thoughts on Uwazurike's strengths:

"He was in the backfield a lot." -Brugler

"He has the potential to get up the field and be disruptive." -Zierlien

Enyi Uwazurike and Will McDonald Cheez-It Bowl 2021

Iowa State defensive lineman Eyioma Uwazurike (left) and Will McDonald (right) rush Clemson quarterback D.J. Uiagalelei in the 2021 Cheez-It Bowl on Dec. 29, 2021.

Collin Maguire/Iowa State Daily
Weaknesses?

Uwazurike gets dinged for a lack of explosiveness on film and consistency.

As mentioned earlier, Uwazurike's history as a pass-rusher didn't take off until this past season and had never had more than three sacks in a season prior to 2021.

And in this year's draft, in most evaluations, edge rushers and defensive linemen appear to be one of the strongest in all of the draft. Uwazurike doesn't rank in the upper half in the defensive lineman group for most.

"There's a sense of, 'it took this long to get to good production,'" Treash said.

Zierlien views Uwazurike as a middle-round talent with positive traits, but a lack of consistency is his knock on Uwazurike as a draft prospect.

"He's a plus athlete, but needs to play with much better consistency at the point of attack," Zierlien said.

Where will he be selected? Best fit?

In this year's draft, many analysts view the middle rounds as a potential for solid pickups for teams to add to their rosters.

Where does Uwazurike fall in that mix?

For starters, every analyst has Uwazurike as a defensive end in a 3-4 at the NFL level. Uwazurike isn't scheme specific, but evaluators see that position as his best mold for NFL teams.

Here's where analysts put Uwazurike on draft weekend:

Brugler has Uwazurike as his 11th overall defensive lineman and going in the fifth round to the Los Angeles Chargers.

Trapasso: "In my opinion, day early three guy, fourth round. Baltimore likes oversized defensive lineman and bigger guys that assert physicality, so maybe them. The Bears could be another team."

Treash: "He's an intriguing option on Day Three."

Zierlien: "He's a middle round talent. I see him as a 3-4 DE due to his physical composition and ability to rush."

NFL Draft Profile: Eyiyoma Uwzurike, Defensive Lineman, Iowa State Cyclones

By Staff

SI.com

March 7, 2022

One-Liners

Stout frame, good run defender versus gap schemes and good ability to collapse the pocket with bull rush but struggles to stay square versus combo blocks and lacks nuance with his hands.

Pros:

Eyiyoma Uwzurike has a stout and thick frame which leads to a natural leverage advantage and he brings physicality to the trenches. Versus the run, Uwzurike is best versus gap scheme base blocks, where he regularly plays with low pad level and when he strikes his hands before his blocker does, he can stack blocks to control the point of attack with force. Occasionally, Uwzurike shows flashes of a swim move to disengage from blockers and create penetration behind the line of scrimmage. In addition, it's a pleasure to watch a guy with his size have a good motor as Uwzurike will regularly chase down plays to the sideline or past the sticks, showing competitiveness. Versus the pass, Uwzurike has found a niche as an interior rusher who can collapse the pocket with his natural power. He demonstrates immense play strength by getting low, achieving inside hand placement and driving his legs to create displacement.

Cons:

Uwzurike has a tweener build and Iowa State often featured him as a defensive end in their 3-3-5 defense, which was not his best position. He lacks many athletic qualities to succeed on the edge - get-off and bend being the most important and also has poor technique when rushing the passer. Uwzurike has no refined moves apart from his bull rush and struggles with his execution of non-bull rushes due to poor precision and timing. Uwzurike's best position is as a nose tackle or shade, unfortunately he lacks great core strength to hold up versus double teams. This is especially apparent versus zone blocks where Uwzurike's average get-off and below average core strength leads to him easily getting turned to the side by combo blocks and allowing for horizontal displacement. Finally, Uwzurike struggles to finish plays as he lacks the refined hand usage to consistently disengage from blocks, plus his below average play speed means he's rarely in close enough position to make a tackle due to below average foot speed, change of direction and mental processing.

Summary:

Uwzurike offers good run defense due to his pad level and hand placement and his ability to collapse the pocket is a great complementary skill. Iowa State moved him to nose tackle in 2021, from EDGE in his previous seasons, which has contributed to a career high in sacks. In the NFL, he should continue as a nose tackle/shade and can play some 3-4 defensive end in a gap control system. Uwzurike can develop into a solid backup, but his ceiling isn't overly high

Background:

Uwzurike attended Southfield-Lathrup high school in Michigan where he was a two-time team defensive MVP and posted 50 tackles, 12 TFL with six sacks as a senior. After high school, 247Sports ranked him as a 3-Star recruit, the 820th-best recruit nationally, the 37th-ranked strong side defensive end recruit in the country and the 22nd recruit in the state of Michigan.

Uwzurike committed to Iowa State over Michigan State, UCF and Temple and he redshirted his freshman year in 2016. In 2017, he played in all 13 games as a key reserve and tallied 16 tackles, 4.0 TFL and 0.5 sack. In 2018, Uwzurike started eight of nine games played and totalled 27 tackles, 5.0 TFL and one sack. Unfortunately, he dealt with a groin injury which knocked him out for four games. In 2019, started all 13 games, was honorable mention All-Big 12 and had 32 tackles, 5.5 TFL and 1.5 sacks. In 2020, he started all 12 games and was again an honorable mention All-Big 12, while tallying 27 tackles, 8.0 TFL, 3.0 sacks and three QB hurries. 2021 has been a breakout year for Uwzurike who through eight games has already tied some stats from last year with 28 tackles, 8.0 TFL. He's improved his pass rush production with 5.0 sacks already.

Grades

Current Player Value/Potential Player Value

7.0 / 7.6

Floor/Ceiling: Backup / Solid Backup

Scheme Fit: NT, 4-3 1-tech, or 3-4 DE in a gap control system

Grade: Late 5th

Overcoming adversities, Detroit native Uwazurike knocking on NFL's door

By Justin Rogers
The Detroit News
March 4, 2022

Eyioma Uwazurike wears his Detroit roots like a badge of honor and his heart on his sleeve. The former Iowa State defensive lineman has overcome personal adversity after personal adversity and now stands on the threshold of achieving his dream of playing in the NFL.

At the scouting combine on Friday, Uwazurike wore a necklace, a reminder of one of his greatest tribulations. The diamond-encrusted piece is a framed picture of his father, Roland, who passed away in 2019.

“That's not only my dad, (but) my best friend,” Uwazurike said. “I wear this around because it's like everywhere I go, he's with me. I feel comfortable here, in this setting, because I know I'm being watched over.”

Only 48 years old, Roland died in his sleep days before Iowa State's bowl game against Notre Dame. Uwazurike woke up in the morning to what he estimated was 30 missed phone calls from his younger brother. It was a devastating blow for the young lineman, but he leaned on his network of support at the school to get him through that difficult time.

In past interviews, Uwazurike hasn't gone into depth about his father, although it's been casually noted that Roland was in and out of his life. The reality is more complicated. In 2010, the Nigerian national was convicted of smuggling in large quantities of heroin into Michigan, worth more than \$150,000, through high school text books.

Football allowed Uwazurike to break free from that cycle, but the path was still far from easy. Despite ranking among the top-50 local players by the Detroit News while attending Southfield-Lathrup in 2015, he struggled to generate much buzz as a recruit. Additionally, academic struggles contributed to both the University of Michigan and Michigan State taking a pass.

In a show of loyalty, Uwazurike decided he would accept the first scholarship offered. That came from University of Toledo and coach Matt Campbell. And when Campbell took the Iowa State job the following year, Uwazurike followed.

Iowa State defensive end Eyima Uwazurike of Detroit high fives fans as the team arrives to play South Dakota State in a 2018 game in Ames, Iowa.

There, academics remained a hurdle. Uwazurike had always struggled in school and didn't know how he'd make it through at Iowa State. And at first, he didn't, being ruled academically ineligible as a freshman. But as impressive as any on-field accomplishment during his five years at the school, Uwazurike turned it around through sheer dedication. By his senior year in 2021, he was named to the academic all-conference team and became the first in his family to graduate college. He's since enrolled in a master's program at Iowa State.

"I had to re-learn how to love school," Uwazurike said. "In Detroit, it was hard to get through school because it was almost a free-for-all.

"I was in the (Iowa State) academic center late nights, every day. My first year, when I was academically ineligible, I had 18 credits. I had like nine classes and I was doing that and football at the same time, really learning how to love school and that part of it. They made it fun and it wasn't fun before. I feel like that's what really changed my whole opinion on school.

"It started off rough, but it's always about how you finish. I finished in the right way."

On the field, he also made impressive developments. He packed on more than 50 pounds, mostly muscle, and became a versatile piece up front for the Cyclones, lining up all across the defensive line. To go with those all-academic honors in 2021, he was also a first-team all-conference selection by the Big 12 coaches after racking up 9.0 sacks.

That's some impressive pass-rush production for a 320-pounder and it's something he's looking to port to the next level.

"I love (playing) the 3-technique," Uwazurike said. "I feel like I thrive at that the most because my pass rush there works a lot. I also like being lined up wide, me being a 4i (technique) sometimes and getting to rush against a guard, I feel like it's a mismatch with a lot of people. I feel like I'm just scraping the surface with my potential there and I can't wait to see what that will look like in the future."

For maybe the first time, the path is clear for Uwazurike. Even though it's uncertain when and where he'll be drafted, it appears highly likely he will be selected this April. His drive and ability to overcome obstacles will undoubtedly impress any decision-maker who considers adding him to their team's roster.

Uwazurike doesn't bemoan those obstacles he's traversed coming out of Detroit. They've molded, shaped and motivated him to reach this point.

"It means everything," he said. "It's where I started playing football, where I gained my love of football, just inner-city Detroit and Detroit PAL. Growing up in Detroit, it's really rough. It makes you the tough person you are. I'm grateful for walking down that path, going through that path in life because it's made me who I am today."

Eyioma Uwazurike declares for NFL Draft

By Matt Belison
Iowa State Daily
January 7, 2022

Eyioma Uwazurike, a program stalwart for Iowa State over the past five seasons, has declared for the NFL Draft.

The 6-foot-6, 320-pound defensive lineman put together five solid seasons for the Cyclones, plugging up the run and steadily increasing his pass-rushing ability as his career went on.

Uwazurike, a Detroit, Mich., native, put together his best season as a Cyclone for last in 2021. Uwazurike earned his first All-Big 12 First Team selection in 2021, ranking fourth in the Big 12 in sacks (9), good for the second-best total in school history.

He set a career-high in tackles (42) and tackles for loss (12.5). Uwazurike had six sacks combined in his previous four seasons.

With his Cyclone career officially finished, Uwazurike ranks second in career tackles for loss (34.5) in Iowa State program history.

Uwazurike, who started 46 games as a Cyclone, is also tied for sixth on Iowa State's career sack list with 15.

Dane Brugler, a NFL Draft analyst for The Athletic, ranked Uwazurike as the 15th best interior defensive lineman in the potential 2022 NFL Draft class back in December.