

# 2011 NFL Draft: One-on-One with Christian Ballard

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

As Christian Ballard awaits to hear his name called this weekend during the 2011 NFL Draft, the former Iowa defensive lineman spoke with *HawkeyeDrive.com* to discuss what his future has in store, as well as reflect back on his Hawkeye career and going through the draft process over the past four months.

Below is the complete transcript of *HawkeyeDrive.com's* interview with Ballard earlier this week:

***HawkeyeDrive.com (HD):*** Now that you have finally reached the week of the NFL Draft, how would you describe your experience going through this whole draft process?

***Christian Ballard:*** I would probably describe this experience as being pretty rare. I've just been visiting teams, meeting coaches, going to their cities. It has been awesome. They just want to get to know you and it has been great getting to meet some of the famous guys you've always watched on TV. It has been pretty special, I'd say.

***HD:*** You had the opportunity to go down to the Senior Bowl last January and that was kind of your first opportunity to work with NFL personnel and get an idea of what it would be like at the next level. What did you take away from that?

***Ballard:*** The first thing I know is that it's a business. Those NFL guys, they're great guys and they want to know you, but at the end of the day, it is a business. It's a little bit more professional. You got to know what you're saying, what you're doing. This is what you're going to be doing hopefully for the

next 4-5 plus years of your life. People are investing a lot of money in you, so it's truly a professional thing. It has been pretty fun at the same time, getting to know some of the guys you hear about on ESPN every day that made plays for their schools. It's great to get to know them and learn a few things from them. It's definitely a business, but fun at the same time though.

**HD:** You were one of nine Iowa guys invited to the NFL Combine, and two of the others were Adrian Clayborn and Karl Klug. Was it nice to be with them and be able to share that moment, that experience with guys you played alongside up front?

**Ballard:** Absolutely. Being with Karl and Adrian and the D-Line group at the Combine, it was great. All of those top-tier guys, some of whom you have been playing with for four or five years of your life, they're some of the best of the bunch. It's great. It's a great feeling. I feel honored, but at the same time, you got to go there to work. We just tried to help each other, encourage each other, and have a blast with it.

**HD:** Just what was it like being there at the NFL Combine and seeing all these different NFL teams wanting to know every little thing about you?

**Ballard:** It was really great. Meeting some of the coaches, it was awesome. You just try to be yourself and try to do what you usually do. They just want to get to know you, and usually it goes pretty well. I had a good time.

**HD:** You don't have to mention specific teams, but were there any conversations you seemed to enjoy with some teams more than others while you were there?

**Ballard:** Yeah. There was one in particular where someone actually knew who my great uncle was. It was really smooth, really laid back. It just kind of flowed and 15 minutes just kind of flew by. It was kind of awesome. Some of the interviews were more football-oriented, more film. There was

definitely a different kind of variety of interviews.

**HD:** Now when you were at Iowa, you had an opportunity to play a lot at both defensive tackle and defensive end. Just based on the conversations you have had with teams and some of the workouts, have you gotten a vibe to whether you'll be more of an end or a tackle in the NFL?

**Ballard:** Probably the most talk has been about end is where they want me at and probably playing some 3-technique as a rush. I'm not sure what's going to happen. You just never know. I think my versatility is definitely going to carry over and I'll probably play both.

**HD:** For clarification, and I ask because I know in the NFL you'll play in either a 4-3 or 3-4, would it be more end in a 3-4 for the most part and in a 4-3, maybe end, maybe tackle?

**Ballard:** Honestly, right now I'm willing to play anywhere. It could be a 3-technique in a 4-3, it could be a 3-technique in a 3-4, a 5-technique in a 4-3. You just got to have an open mind and I guess wait for a couple of days from now.

**HD:** Touching on the versatility here, do you feel that has helped you going through this process knowing that you've played both positions and that maybe NFL teams will think higher of you because they know they can put you anywhere on the defensive line?

**Ballard:** I mean, you never know what an NFL team is going to think, but I think it definitely helped me out that I played both tackle and end. I think that was a huge thing for me, and I've got to thank the coaching staff for that. I think it's just going to be big for me to relearn and adapt to wherever they need me to play at the next level, which is pretty good.

**HD:** Over the past 3-4 months, have you been in touch much with some former Iowa teammates and maybe tried seeking advice from them about the process and what you could expect, maybe even

ask them some of their stories?

**Ballard:** Definitely. I worked out with Pat Angerer, [Chad] Greenway, and all of those guys. They're still up there. You talk to them and ask them about what to expect and what to know, and they really all tell you the same thing, which is you really just want to do what you've been doing here. Coach Ferentz runs such a great program and it kind of gets you ready for the next level, so just keep working hard, make sure to study, study, study, and hopefully good things will come after just because you work at it.

**HD:** Now this week, do you have any plans in place as far as the draft is concerned? Are you going to watch the draft at all, or just try to avoid it altogether until you get the call?

**Ballard:** I'll probably just avoid it. Honestly, I'll probably just be hanging out with my son, wait for them to call me. I'm going to probably be doing that all week, so whenever I get the call, I'll just take it from there.

**HD:** Now I have to ask you here because of the lockout situation in the NFL, what type of plan have you and your agent put in place as far as the things you'll be able to do here after the draft until the lockout ends and you're actually able to participate in team activities?

**Ballard:** Yeah. I have no idea what's going to happen with the lockout, so I'll probably just work out until it gets solved, and I'll just go to wherever they tell me to go. I'll probably just stay up in Iowa, train, and just wait.

**HD:** How much of a factor has the whole lockout situation played on you as you've been planning for your future here?

**Ballard:** You know, that's something that I really just can't control. I just kind of look at it that you hope the best thing for you can happen. Obviously, you'd want them to

resolve it so you can get to the camp, play defense, start working and get ready to play. But if it takes longer to resolve, it takes longer to resolve. You just got to be ready to play when it gets done. It's probably going to be a quick turnaround, but you just got to take it as it is, and be ready to go.

**HD:** Whenever you get the chance to reflect back on college and your career as an Iowa Hawkeye, what resonates or sticks with you the most, or is the first thought to enter your mind?

**Ballard:** Probably just the work ethic that Iowa instills in those players. Accountability. All of those that make a good football player. I'll probably look to those to help me out to hopefully continue my future. I really appreciate what they did for me, so I got to do what I can to make sure I keep the place growing.

**HD:** Final question. Moving forward, when you do get drafted, the lockout is over, and you finally get the chance to be with the team that drafts you, what does the future have in store for you? What type of player do you see yourself being in the NFL?

**Ballard:** I just want to be the best player that I can possibly be. I'm just going to go and work on the things I know I need to work on, work on them every day, study, and hopefully I can just be the best I can be.