

Clayborn taken 20th overall by Tampa Bay

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

Former Iowa defensive end Adrian Clayborn was selected 20th overall in the first round of the 2011 NFL Draft by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Thursday. This marks the second straight year a Hawkeye has been taken in the draft's first round, and Clayborn is the 18th first-rounder produced by Iowa.

Clayborn is also the sixth defensive lineman produced under Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz to be drafted, and the first since Kenny Iwebema was taken by the Arizona Cardinals in 2008.

In four seasons at Iowa, three of which he started, the St. Louis native amassed a total of 192 tackles and 19 sacks. As a senior in 2010, Clayborn finished with 52 tackles and 3.5 sacks. Despite the decline in numbers from a junior year that saw him compile 73 tackles and 11.5 sacks, Buccaneers general manager Mark Dominik said during an interview on buccaneers.com Thursday evening that Clayborn was a player Tampa Bay had targeted since 2009, before he made the decision to return for his senior year at Iowa.

"He brings a lot to our locker room. He has also got some leadership ability that you can never underestimate on any football team in any way," Dominik said. "We're really excited about him. Adrian's a great football player. I think our Tampa fans are really going to enjoy watching him play over the next few years."

The Buccaneers, who missed the playoffs in 2010 despite finishing with a 10-6 record, brought Clayborn down to Tampa

for a visit earlier in the month, one he said was his best visit "by far."

"It was real, and I knew it was the fit for me," Clayborn said Thursday during an interview that streamed on buccaneers.com. "Everybody was energetic and things like that, and it was fun. It was a good visit."

The feeling between Clayborn and the Buccaneers was mutual. Dominik said taking Clayborn with the 20th pick was "an easy selection." Tampa Bay head coach Raheem Morris described himself as being "fired up" about the player he said was atop the Buccaneers' draft board being available when it was their turn to pick.

"When he came in a couple of weeks ago, [Dominik and I] both looked at each other and knew, 'That was the guy,'" Morris said during a press conference with Tampa media on Thursday. "You can't get over-exuberant about it. You got to pick the guy when he's there, and be prepared for what you're going to do if he's not. We were excited about it."

Both Dominik and Morris stressed the importance of Clayborn having been a two-time captain while playing for the Hawkeyes as something that factored into their decision-making. Clayborn, who is the first Iowa player ever selected in the NFL draft by the Buccaneers, made clear he wants to provide an immediate impact to Tampa Bay and believes he'll be able to.

"I believe I'm a leader and that I can lead this defense," Clayborn said. "I'm excited to be on board."

***Be sure to visit HawkeyeDrive.com throughout the weekend as more Iowa players get selected in the 2011 NFL Draft.**