

Packers rookie tackle David Bakhtiari 'has all the tools'

By [Bob McGinn](#) of the Journal Sentinel
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Green Bay — Tackle David Bakhtiari fully expects to be a player for the Green Bay Packers, and four days into training camp his coaches and teammates can see why.

Whether it has been blocking for run or pass, or just the general way the Colorado rookie carries himself, Bakhtiari has been impressive early.

"He's off to a real good start," coach Mike McCarthy said. "You could see it in the spring. Very bright kid. Like his feet."

Bakhtiari, a fourth-round draft choice, is working as the No. 2 left tackle behind Bryan Bulaga and the No. 3 right tackle behind Marshall Newhouse and Don Barclay.

In the one-on-one pass-protection drill, Bakhtiari has a 4-0-1 record on the left side and a 3-1 mark on the right. Two of his seven victories came against Clay Matthews, the litmus test for tackles at Nitschke Field.

Sporting a 7-1-1 record after nine reps, Bakhtiari is a tad better than the 6-2-1 debut in July 2010 for Bulaga. Derek Sherrod was 5-2-2 at this point in 2011, and Barclay had a rough 2-4-3 indoctrination last year.

Bakhtiari, 6 feet 4 1/2 inches and 304 pounds, also has shown no inherent weakness in the run game.

Quarterback Aaron Rodgers has seen enough offensive linemen in nine summers to know that even without pads it's evident when someone cannot play.

Bakhtiari has been anything but that guy.

"I think he looks the part," said Rodgers. "He has all the tools. He has a long frame and good body control. He keeps a good pad level. He's got a ways to go, but he's got a chance."

Among the 14 offensive linemen drafted by general manager Ted Thompson, Bakhtiari and Bulaga were the only juniors.

Unlike Bulaga, who played guard as a true freshman at Iowa and started just two seasons at left tackle, Bakhtiari spent four years in Boulder. After redshirting in 2009, he played right tackle opposite New England left tackle Nate Solder in '10 and then started at left tackle the past two years.

Bakhtiari, who scored 25 on the Wonderlic intelligence test, exudes maturity. He's confident, not cocky.

His brother, Eric, taught him tons about pro football, having bounced around as a linebacker for seven NFL teams from 2008-'12. At the same time, Bakhtiari found the strength to battle through the Buffaloes' 1-11 catastrophe last year.

After the season, he evaluated his options after hearing back from the NFL draft advisory committee that he projected as a second-round choice.

"That was positive," said Bakhtiari. "I weighed the factors. I'm not an absolute freak of ability, so I couldn't see myself as a top-10 pick. I would love to be, to be honest, but when I thought realistically...

"My coach even told me. He said, 'Look, if you come back and improve, you could probably be a late first-rounder if everything works out.'

"When I slipped, that sucks, but I got picked up by the Packers, which is probably one of the best situations.

"You look at their type of player, it fits perfectly with the type of player I am. The zone run game fits me really well. They wanted offensive linemen, which is good. And they're a good team with a great quarterback."

Of the 13 personnel people that offered opinions on Bakhtiari before and just after the draft, seven mentioned that he was either a finesse blocker, soft or lacked strength.

There isn't much doubt it's the reason why Bakhtiari, who has sought to emulate Pro Bowl left tackle Joe Staley of San Francisco, lasted until the 109th selection.

"But I don't see that," McCarthy said when Bakhtiari's finesse label was brought up. "He sticks his face in there. I have no issue with his tenacity."

Two days in pads mean little, but for now that's the body of work. Off such a sample, it certainly would seem that Bakhtiari could be a more physical run blocker than Daryn Colledge.

"The first day I did go against him and he rolled me back about 6 yards," defensive end Mike Daniels said of a drive block by Bakhtiari. "He's a long guy. Strong kid. You can tell he's been well-coached.

"He reminds me of (Josh) Sitton. He's got that real nice, cool personality, but when he gets on the field he turns into a psychopath."

After trading down twice late in the third round, Thompson used the 109th choice on Bakhtiari, and he was the 19th offensive lineman taken. The 109th slot also is where the Packers found guard T.J. Lang in 2009.

The group of players who were the 19th offensive lineman taken in the previous 15 drafts has an uneven record of achievement that runs about par for the course.

Three of the 15 — tackles David Stewart, Jason Fabini, and guard Jake Scott — have started more than 100 games. Another has made 82 starts, one started 39, three started between 11 and 25 games and two started 10 or fewer. Five never even started a game.

It wasn't until last season that any of the 15 earned a berth in the Pro Bowl. That was guard Wade Smith of the

Houston Texans.

Bakhtiari was asked to consider the list of the 11 tackles that were drafted ahead of him in April. Headed by Eric Fisher, Luke Joeckel, Lane Johnson and D.J. Fluker, that list included six first-round choices.

"Without a doubt" was Bakhtiari's answer when asked if he might be ranked among the top three or four tackles after everyone's career is completed.

"I just know the type of character I am," he said.

"I know I'm a coachable person. I like to work hard, and I want to achieve certain things.

"I've had some good plays but I've also had some bad plays. It's not all glitz and glamour. I do think I'm doing well, but at the same time I still have things to work on."

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