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# Fashion Takes Center Stage At NFL Draft

McKenna White and Emma Jaber

Every spring, the Met Gala gives celebrities the chance to showcase their personal fashion style, albeit within the confines of a theme. However, the Met Gala was not the only fashion-forward event of the season. This year's NFL draft became something of a fashion show, with prospective players incorporating their unique style and background into their outfits.

Seattle University alumna and 2020-2021 Sports & Opinion Editor, Augustyna Chan, commented on the NFL draft, one of her favorite events of the year, and the fashion each draftee showed up in.

"I'm biased toward the NFL but it is always so fun to see what the guys choose to wear on night one," Chan wrote to The Spectator. "You can truly learn a lot about someone's personality based on their fashion choices and I love that the NFL has embraced this—from the fun colored suits, to the patterns and the jewelry choices, the outfits that these guys choose to wear reveal a little bit about themselves. The event provides athletes the opportunity to set the tone of how they want to be perceived in the league moving forward.

Players have typically worn designer suits to the draft, but this year, they took things up a notch. Arguably the most talked about outfit of the night was worn by cornerback Ahmad Gardner, the number four pick of the draft. Ahmad, who was drafted by the New York Jets, was nicknamed "Sauce" by his former coach, Curtez Harris. Gardner embraced his nickname during the draft, topping off his powder-blue suit with two diamond-studded chains. One donned the word "Sauce," and the other was a bottle that contained actual hot sauce.

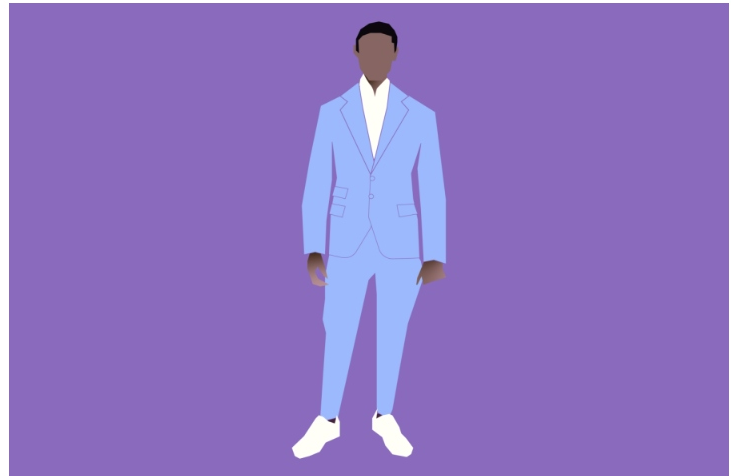
Gardner's confidence, reflected in his viral outfit, was evident before the draft.

"I feel like I'm the chosen one," Gardner said in a recent interview. "I feel like I'm the best in the draft. There's no doubt about it. There's no way I can be a bust. That shouldn't even be an option."

Custom chains seemed to be a trend throughout the night, as multiple players wore chains complete with their names. Bright colors and bold patterns were another trend. Wide receiver Jameson Williams, wore a bright red suit, accessorized with grills, a watch and a chain, all of which were diamond-studded. Nakobe Dean, a linebacker who was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles, wore a blush pink suit, topped off with a statement hat.

Daniel Nzanga, a third-year design major, appreciated the statement jewelry.

"I think it's really cool, the jewelry instead of a tie. It's really tying well into streetwear and especially hip hop culture and I think it's a cool mix to see that with the NFL because usually, it's a league that doesn't lean onto hip hop culture and street wear that much," Nzanga said.



Luca Del Carlo

While fashion was the theme of the night, some players used the spotlight to share their history. Ikem Ekwonu, the number six overall pick, showed up to the red carpet in a detailed cream suit with white and green stripes on one lapel and on the sleeves. The colors reflect Ekwonu's Nigerian roots. Defensive tackle Jordan Davis donned a black suit with red details, a nod to his alma mater, the University of Georgia.

Chan wrote that Garrett Wilson, a wide receiver from Ohio St drafted at pick 10 by the New York Jets stood out to her.

"Of course the loud and blingy outfits stand out, but my favorite of night one belonged to Garrett Wilson. The pearls, Prada boots and the two-tone gray and white suit felt both classy and bold to me," Chan wrote.

Nzanga reflected on the tradition within the outfits and the legendary status of players in the making.

"I really like how it pops out more and creates more memorable moments. With the rise of the player, looking back on the draft, it will be more of a memorable moment versus wearing a basic black suit," Nzanga said. "I think the NBA probably wore standout suits first if I'm not mistaken, and now looking back on it when you think of LeBron, everyone remembers the big white top to bottom suit. It's kind of an iconic moment once the player becomes iconic. I think the suits in the NFL are going to be really cool to look back on with how well the players do on their NFL team."

This isn't the first time that prospective players have incorporated high fashion into the draft. The draft is a night that many players have been working towards for their entire lives and players have always put their best foot forward when it comes to their outfits. In 2015, defensive lineman Dante Fowler Jr. showed up to the draft in spiked Louboutins. Almost every year since at least one player has followed suit.

This year, Malik Willis of the Tennessee Titans completed his look with a pair of spike Louboutin sneakers. In years past, players have lined the interior of their suits with prints that are meaningful to them and their careers. On the outside, these suits fit in with the sleek designer outfits, but once the interior is exposed, viewers can expect anything from a sasquatch to a Pizza Hut advertisement.

It seems as though the draft itself isn't the only event of the night. Players who are drafted later in the process still have a chance to make waves. The draft gives players who are normally viewed solely in the context of their sport, the ability to make a lasting impression and show off their personality through their fashion.