



**ELEVEN INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS TO COMPETE FOR A SPOT
IN THE 2021 NFL INTERNATIONAL PLAYER PATHWAY PROGRAM**

Eleven athletes from nine countries will compete for a spot in the 2021 International Player Pathway Program, the NFL announced today. Instituted in 2017, the program aims to provide elite international athletes the opportunity to compete at the NFL level, improve their skills, and ultimately earn a spot on an NFL roster.

“Since its creation in 2017, this program has been a part of the league’s continuous efforts to strengthen the pipeline of international players in the NFL,” said **Damani Leech**, NFL Chief Operating Officer of International. “We look forward to providing athletes from around the world with the opportunity to showcase their skills as we continue to grow the game globally.”

Aaron Donkor (Germany), **Taku Lee** (Japan), **Yoann Miangue** (France), **Leonel Misangumukini** (Austria), **Adedayo Odeleye** (United Kingdom), **Ayo Oyelola** (United Kingdom), **Max Pircher** (Italy), **Sammis Reyes** (Chile), **Bernhard Seikovits** (Austria), **Lone Toailoa** (New Zealand) and **Alfredo Gutierrez** (Mexico) will soon begin training in the United States in hopes of being selected for a practice squad position for next season through the International Player Pathway Program.

One of the NFL's eight divisions, to be chosen at random, will receive the international players selected for the 2021 program. At the conclusion of preseason training camp, each player will be eligible for an international player practice squad exemption with his assigned team. This provides the assigned team an additional practice squad member for the season.

This year’s participants are:

| Player | Position | Country | Affiliation |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Aaron Donkor | LB | Germany | Arkansas State University (former) |
| Taku Lee | RB | Japan | Obic Seagulls |
| Yoann Miangue | DL | France | Flash de la Courneuve |
| Leonel Misangumukini | DE | Austria | Dacia Vienna Vikings |
| Adedayo Odeleye | DE | United Kingdom | Loughborough University |
| Ayo Oyelola | LB | United Kingdom | Nottingham University |
| Max Pircher | OL | Italy | Hildesheim Invaders |
| Sammis Reyes | TE | Chile | Tulane University (former) |
| Bernhard Seikovits | TE | Austria | Dacia Vienna Vikings |
| Lone Toailoa | DL | New Zealand | Cal Berkeley (former) |
| Alfredo Gutierrez | OL | Mexico | Tec de Monterrey |

Notable International Player Pathway Program participants currently on NFL rosters include:

Jakob Johnson, Fullback (Germany), New England Patriots

Johnson began his football career in his hometown of Stuttgart, Germany, playing for the Stuttgart Scorpions of the German Football League before moving to Jacksonville. He played one season of high school football in the United States and was recruited to continue his career at the University of Tennessee. Johnson returned to the Scorpions in 2018. He was assigned to the New England Patriots through the International Player Pathway Program, and ultimately signed to the active roster. During the season, teams can carry an International Pathway Program player as an extra eleventh member of the practice squad, but because of the roster exemption, clubs cannot promote the player to the active roster during the season. In the case of Johnson, the Patriots elected to forgo that option and make him a regular member of their 10-man practice squad, which gave them the option of promoting him. In 2019, Johnson's NFL debut came in a Week 3 win against the New York Jets. His first NFL start came the following week in Buffalo where he contributed as a lead blocker. In Week 5, he made his first career reception for five yards against Washington. 2020 brought on another set of firsts for the German fullback. Johnson has played in 15 games for New England and scored his first career touchdown in Week 2 against the Seattle Seahawks. The touchdown catch was the first regular season touchdown scored by an International Pathway Program participant.

Jordan Mailata, Tackle (Australia), Philadelphia Eagles

In 2017, Mailata participated in the International Player Pathway program and trained at IMG Academy. The Samoan-born Australian former professional rugby league player for the South Sydney Rabbitohs was then drafted in the seventh round of the 2018 NFL Draft by the Philadelphia Eagles (thereby making him ineligible for the International Player Pathway Program). Converting to football full-time early in 2018, he impressed NFL scouts at various workouts with his strength, footwork and athleticism, and continued his football journey with the Eagles during the 2018 season as the youngest player on their roster. Mailata's workload has increased in 2020. The 23-year-old Australian has started at both left and right tackle for the Eagles during the 2020 NFL season.

Efe Obada, Defensive End (UK), Carolina Panthers

Obada was raised in London after arriving from the Netherlands at age 10. He signed as a free agent for the Dallas Cowboys in 2015 after playing only five games of amateur football with the London Warriors. He played in the preseason for the Cowboys and spent part of the 2015 season on the club's practice squad. He has since had spells on the rosters of the Kansas City Chiefs and Atlanta Falcons before joining the Carolina Panthers practice squad as part of the 2017 International Player Pathway Program. In 2018, Obada became the first player from the NFL International Pathway program to make a 53-man roster. In Week 3 against the Cincinnati Bengals, Obada played his first regular season game, earning NFC Defensive Player of the Week honors for his one-sack, one-interception performance. Obada has continued to make an impact with the Panthers. After recording eight total tackles in 2018, he surpassed that mark with a total of 24 tackles while playing every game in 2019. The defensive end has remained a durable and reliable force on the Panthers defensive line. He has not missed a game thus far in 2020 and has recorded a career-high 4.5 sacks. Obada also recorded his 1000th-career snap in the NFL during Week 10 against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

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