

Fletcher Signs with Browns

Written by Mike Kelly
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Former Appalachian State Mountaineer Jabari Fletcher will finally get a chance to showcase his talents on the largest stage there is.

Fletcher, a first-team All-Southern Conference selection and All-America, has signed a free-agent contract with the Cleveland Browns of the National Football League. This is Fletcher's second shot at professional football.

He was taken as an unsigned free agent by the Montreal Alouettes of the Canadian Football League, but he was released two weeks later. Now, he'll get his shot in the NFL after the players and the owners ended their 4 1/2 month lockout Monday---the longest in league history. And Fletcher, who was among 11 free agent players signed by the Browns on Wednesday, comes to camp with some impressive credentials. During his four-year stay at ASU,, Fletcher became only the seventh player in the football program's history to record 20 quarterback sacks and 40 tackles-for-loss in his career. Fletcher turned in 21 sacks and 45.2 TFL.

Last season, he had eight sacks and 14.5 TFL, which ranked him among the leaders, both nationally and in the SoCon. He was named Southern Conference Defensive Player of the Week on two occasions, and he was also recognized as the SoCon's Defensive Player of the Month for October.

Fletcher was named to the American Football Coaches Association and Walter Camp All-America squads last fall. Fletcher also becomes the fourth Mountaineer from the Class of 2010-11 to join the NFL.

Offensive lineman Daniel Kilgore (San Francisco 49ers), linebacker D.J. Smith (Green Bay Packers) and defensive back Mark LeGree (Seattle Seahawks) were all taken in the NFL draft last April.

PANTHERS SIGN JOHNSON TO HUGE DEAL

The Carolina Panthers didn't waste any time signing defensive end Charles Johnson Wednesday.

The Panthers made the first major move of the season as they signed Johnson to a \$76 million

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dollar deal just two days after the NFL owners and players concluded their 4 1/2 month lockout----the longest in league history.

Johnson receives a \$30 million dollar signing bonus and \$32 million dollars of that money is guaranteed. Johnson had 11.5 quarterback sacks for the Panthers last fall.

The Panthers will play their pre-season opener at home against the New York Giants on August 13; the Panthers kick-off the regular season in Phoenix against the Arizona Cardinals on September 11.

TAR HEELS INVITED TO MAUI CLASSIC

The University of North Carolina has been invited to the EA Sports Maui Inviational in Hawaii in 2012. Joining the Tar Heels in the eight-team field will be two-time national runnerup Butler. Texas, Illinois, Marquette, Mississippi State, Southern California, and Division II Chaminade, the host school, round out the eight-team field. The Tar Heels have won the Maui Invitational three times---1999, 2004 and in 2008. And they won the national championship in two of those years, 2004 and 2008.

Duke and Tennessee highlight the card this season, November 21-23. Georgetown, Kansas, Memphis, Michigan, UCLA and Chaminade complete the field.

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