

= Obi Ezech =

Obi Pius Ezech (February 2 , 1988) is a former American football linebacker . He was included on both the 2009 midseason and the 2009 preseason watchlist for the Butkus Award . He was the active Michigan Wolverines football career leader in tackles .

In high school , he played running back on offense more regularly than linebacker on defense . He shared running duties as a sophomore and junior before becoming the starter as a senior at Catholic Central High School in Grand Rapids , Michigan . He established his school career rushing record of nearly 3 @, @ 000 yards . As a senior he scored a two @-@ point conversion to give his school a one @-@ point victory and a berth in the 2005 Michigan High School Athletic Association state championship game at Ford Field . He was also a member of a three @-@ time state champion high school rugby team and was invited to tryout with the United States national rugby union team .

At Michigan , he redshirted as a true freshman . Then , as a redshirt freshman for the 2007 Michigan Wolverines football team , he battled for the starting middle linebacker position and appeared to have lost the position early in the season . However , after an injury he became a regular starter . He concluded the season with thirteen and twelve tackle efforts against bitter rivals Michigan State and Ohio State , respectively . He started his redshirt sophomore season with a Big Ten Conference defensive player of the week , fifteen @-@ tackle effort for the 2008 Michigan Wolverines football team . He finished the season as an honorable mention All @-@ Big Ten Conference selection . Just after earning 2009 midseason Butkus Award watchlist recognition , he was removed from the starting lineup and saw limited action in the final four games .

After his senior season in 2010 , Ezech declared for the 2011 NFL Draft , where he went undrafted . He later signed as an undrafted free agent with the Washington Redskins .

= = High school = =

As a youth , Ezech was unable to play football because he was too big for the local leagues according to Grand Rapids area officials . As a sophomore running back for the 2003 Catholic Central Cougars football team , Ezech had several 100 @-@ yard games as well as multiple touchdown games , even though he was not the primary weapon in the backfield . Ezech was also a member of the Cougars rugby team that placed 11th at the 2004 United States High School Rugby National Championships .

As a junior running back , he opened his football season with 170 yards on 18 carries . In the 2004 district championship game , he rushed for 88 yards in the first half , but was held to 5 in the second half as Catholic Central lost 33 ? 20 . Over the course of the season he compiled 907 rushing yards and 13 touchdowns . Ezech was recognized as a Detroit News Class B All @-@ state honorable mention linebacker . He was also selected as Grand Rapids All @-@ area honorable mention , according to The Grand Rapids Press . He also helped lead the 2005 rugby team to a State Championship threepeat .

In 2005 , Ezech entered his senior season as the focal point of his school 's running game and was rated as the seventh best football prospect in the state of Michigan , according to The Detroit News . He was also invited to tryout for the United States national rugby union team as an outside center . During the season , Ezech was regularly among the leading rushers in the area . In the Division 4 state semifinal game , Ezech returned a kickoff 80 yards for a touchdown and rushed for 136 yards on 24 carries . During the game , after Catholic Central scored on a quarterback sneak with 2 : 28 remaining , Ezech scored on a two @-@ point conversion to give his team a 35 ? 34 victory . This led them to the 2005 MHSAA state championship game at Ford Field , which they lost 17 ? 10 to Powers Catholic High School . By the end of the season , Ezech had compiled a school record 2 @, @ 914 career rushing yards , which included 33 touchdowns . During his senior year he also occasionally played linebacker , recording 34 tackles (16 for a loss) . Although , he missed part of the season with an ankle injury , he totaled 1 @, @ 391 yards and 10 touchdowns on 217 carries and added seven pass receptions , including one touchdown , and he was recognized as a 2nd

@-@ team All @-@ area running back . The Detroit News recognized him as their postseason number six blue chip prospect in the state , and he was selected to play in the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association 's annual all @-@ star game . In February 2006 , he signed his letter of intent to play for Michigan , where it was unclear whether he would play fullback , tight end or linebacker .

= = Michigan = =

As expected , Ezech , who had suffered a shoulder injury , redshirted his freshman year . Prior to his redshirt freshman season , he changed jersey numbers from 44 to 45 as he converted from fullback to linebacker . On May 22 , 2007 , he was charged with suspicion of operating a vehicle while intoxicated for an incident when his vehicle struck a utility pole on the same street on which he lives while his blood @-@ alcohol content was 0 @. @ 11 % (the legal limit in Michigan is 0 @. @ 08 %) . Ezech pleaded not guilty , and the trial was scheduled for September 19 in the 15th District Court . The time of the accident was outside the permissible times for Ezech 's restricted driving license that resulted from a prior non @-@ alcohol @-@ related accident . On the football field , redshirt freshman Ezech entered the 2007 NCAA Division I FBS football season for the 2007 Michigan Wolverines football team in a three @-@ way battle to replace NFL @-@ bound David Harris at middle linebacker with redshirt junior John Thompson and junior college transfer Austin Panter , who had been named national junior college defensive player of the year . Harris also hailed from Grand Rapids and had worn the number 45 . The week before the season opener , The Detroit News declared Ezech the starter , however , the Ann Arbor News and Ezech 's hometown The Grand Rapids Press both stated that the race between Ezech and Thompson was undecided heading into the game . In the aftermath of the September 1 opening game loss to two @-@ time defending FCS champion Appalachian State Mountaineers , more was made of the fact that both players had trouble playing the position than who had started the game . Ezech started the first game , but lost his spot to Thompson in the next two . After three weeks of play , Thompson , who had been voted the hardest hitter on the team the previous two seasons , had established himself as the starter by ranking second on the team in tackles . However , although Thompson had stepped up to the role he was notable for having trouble with pass coverage . Ezech accumulated no statistics in the third and fourth game , but recorded his first interception in the fifth game on September 29 against Northwestern on a deflected pass . Ezech started that game because of an injury . The following week , he again started in place of the injured Thompson and recorded nine tackles against Eastern Michigan . He also forced a fumble and fielded one kickoff return . Even though Thompson recovered from his ankle injury after four weeks , Ezech retained the starting job the remainder of the season for a total of ten starts . Thompson only recorded four tackles the rest of the year . On November 1 , his lawyer stated that on August 29 Ezech had pleaded guilty to an operating while visibly intoxicated charge , which is a serious misdemeanor but a lesser charge than the original operating a vehicle while intoxicated , and had sought alcohol counseling prior to his sentence . The plea resulted in a year 's probation , three days in a work release program , a substantial payment covering fines , court costs and restitution . He committed to attend a Mothers Against Drunk Driving class . In the November 3 Paul Bunyan Trophy victory against Michigan State he recorded a season @-@ high 13 tackles and two sacks . One of the sacks occurred on Michigan State 's final series of downs in Michigan territory to help secure the 28 ? 24 win . Ezech recorded 12 tackles in the Michigan ? Ohio State rivalry game against Ohio State on November 17 to end the regular season .

After the graduation of Shawn Crable and Chris Graham there was again a notable battle for linebacker positions entering the 2008 NCAA Division I FBS football season for the 2008 Michigan Wolverines football team . Ezech who had posted 68 tackles in 2007 was the leading returning tackler . As the only returning starting linebacker , Ezech assumed the role of mentor . Ezech won the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week award on September 1 , 2008 for a game against the Utah Utes where he recorded 15 tackles and an interception . He also earned an ABC Player of the Game recognition . Ezech also posted fifteen tackles in the October 4 game against the Illinois Fighting Illini , which earned him his second ABC Player of the Game award . He posted two other

double digit tackle games , including a ten tackle effort in his second Paul Bunyan Trophy game . Ezeh finished the season seventh in the Big Ten in tackles . He was recognized as an honorable mention All @-@ Big Ten selection by both the coaches and the media .

Ezeh entered the 2009 NCAA Division I FBS football season opener with the third most career starts (23) on the 2009 Michigan Wolverines football team behind punter Zoltan Mesko (38) and offensive lineman Stephen Schilling (26) . As a redshirt junior during the 2009 season for the Wolverines , Ezeh posted fourteen tackles against Michigan State bringing his three @-@ game career total to 37 tackles against the Spartans . Ezeh had grown up in a neighborhood with many Michigan State fans who flew their Michigan State flags , and he once attended Michigan Football camp wearing a Michigan State shirt . He has been included on both the 2009 midseason and the 2009 preseason watchlist for the Butkus Award . The midseason list includes sixteen linebackers . Although he was added to the midseason Butkus watchlist in mid October , on October 31 he was removed from the starting lineup after starting 29 straight games .

During the 2010 NCAA Division I FBS football season he started the first six games for the 2010 Michigan Wolverines football team before losing the starting middle linebacker position to Kenny Demens . Ezeh 's final regular start was against Michigan State on October 9 , when he tied his season @-@ high with nine tackles and boosted his career total against Michigan State to 46 . When Jonas Mouton was unavailable for the Purdue game on November 13 due to a chest injury , Ezeh stepped in and recorded his first sack of the season as well as eight solo tackles .

= = Professional career = =

= = = Pre @-@ draft = = =

At his initial March 17 , 2011 pro day , he posted modest numbers : 40 @-@ yard dash - 5 @.@ 07 seconds ; vertical jump 30 inches (76 @.@ 2 cm) and standing broad jump 9 feet 2 inches (2 @.@ 79 m) . However , after hiring a new trainer he posted better numbers at an April regional combine : 40 @-@ yard dash - 4 @.@ 81 seconds ; vertical jump 34 @.@ 5 inches (87 @.@ 6 cm) and standing broad jump 9 feet 4 inches (2 @.@ 84 m) as well as a 4 @.@ 81 time in the 20 @-@ yard shuttle .

= = = Washington Redskins = = =

He went undrafted in the 2011 NFL Draft and in the first few days following the 2011 NFL lockout he went unsigned , before signing with the Washington Redskins as an undrafted free agent on July 31 , 2011 . He was waived on August 19 .

= = Personal = =

Ezeh is the son of Pius and Nkechyi . He has four siblings : Onyinye , Kaka , Nnenna and Nicole .