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COMMUNICATIONS

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**SEVEN INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS COMPETE FOR A SPOT IN THE
NFL INTERNATIONAL PLAYER PATHWAY PROGRAM**

Seven athletes from five countries will compete for a spot in the 2019 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.

The league has identified seven top athletes from five countries that will compete for a place in the 2019 program. Given the program's success to date, the NFL widened its search for international talent, with players from Brazil and Mexico participating for the first time. Athletes from Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom will again be represented, including two professional Rugby players, Valentine Holmes and Christian Wade, who are attempting to cross over to the NFL.

David Bada (Germany), Moubarak Djeri (Germany), Valentine Holmes (Australia), Jakob Johnson (Germany), Dural Neto (Brazil), Maximo Sanchez (Mexico) and Christian Wade (United Kingdom) will begin training in the United States next month and will have the opportunity to showcase their talents to NFL club scouts in March in hopes of being signed as a free agent or being selected for a 2019 practice squad position through the International Player Pathway Program.

One of the NFL's eight divisions, to be chosen at random, will receive international players should they not be signed to free agent contracts. At the conclusion of training camp, players will be eligible for an international player practice squad exemption with teams being given an exemption for an eleventh practice squad member – ineligible to be activated during the season.

Players will train alongside NFL veterans and draft hopefuls in Florida under the supervision of IMG Academy coaches, including running back coach Earnest Byner, offensive line coach Paul Dunn, linebackers coach Pepper Johnson and wide receiver coach Larry Kirksey.

For the fourth consecutive season, the journey of these prospects will be documented through the *NFL Undiscovered* series. Watch the previous three seasons of *NFL Undiscovered* on the NFL's YouTube and Facebook channels, including the [2018 series](#).

Highlights from the program to date include:

MORITZ BÖHRINGER, Tight End/Wide Receiver (Germany), Age: 25 – Cincinnati Bengals

In 2016, Böhringer was selected in the sixth round of the NFL Draft by the Minnesota Vikings, becoming the first player to be drafted directly from European football. He spent the 2016 season on the Vikings practice squad. Böhringer is currently on the Cincinnati Bengals practice squad as part of the 2018 International Player Pathway Program.

JORDAN MAILATA, Tackle (Australia), Age: 21 – Philadelphia Eagles

The 2018 NFL Draft culminated an exciting time for Mailata, a past program participant. The Samoan-born Australian former professional rugby league player for the South Sydney Rabbitohs was drafted in the seventh round by the Philadelphia Eagles (thereby making him ineligible for the International Player Pathway Program). Converted to football full-time early in 2018, the 6-8, 350-pounder 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.

EFE OBADA, Defensive End (UK), Age: 26 – 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.

Players taking part in the 2019 program:

DAVID BADA, Defensive End, (Germany), Age: 23

Currently plays in the German Football League's top division for the Schwabisch Hall Unicorns. Had previously played for the Ingolstadt Dukes where he developed as a pass rusher.

MOUBARAK DJERI, Defensive Tackle, (Germany), Age: 22

Born in Togo and moved to Germany in 2007. Played for the Cologne Crocodiles of the German Football League. Spent five seasons with the club before trying out for the Arizona Cardinals where he was signed in 2017 and participated in OTA's before being released the day before training camp.

VALENTINE HOLMES, Running Back/Wide Receiver/Kick Returner, (Australia), Age: 23

A professional rugby player from Australia's National Rugby League. Signed his first contract with the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks at age 17 and made his professional debut with the club at the age of 19. Played the winger and fullback positions. Represented Australia in the 2017 Rugby World Cup and scored five tries (touchdowns) in the quarterfinals. The following game, he set a record with six tries in the semifinals.

JAKOB JOHNSON, Fullback, (Germany), Age: 24

Played for the Stuttgart Scorpions of the German Football League before moving to Jacksonville. Played one season of high school football and was recruited to continue his career at the University of Tennessee. Although recruited as a linebacker, transitioned to a tight end during his sophomore season. Attended Tennessee for four years.

DURVAL NETO, Defensive Tackle, (Brazil), Age: 25

Played domestically in Brazil for the past four seasons on the two best teams in Brazil. Was a judo champion prior to playing football. Emerging from an international market that has seen NFL players in the past, he has been noted with having great athletic ability and a willingness to learn.

MAXIMO SANCHEZ, Linebacker, (Mexico), Age: 25

Has played in multiple domestic leagues in Mexico and was selected to represent the country for Team World against the USA U19 team. Is currently playing for Tech Monterrey, one of the best university programs in Mexico. Transitioned to OLB following his time as a 4-3 defensive end.

CHRISTIAN WADE, Running Back/Kick Returner, (England), Age: 27

Represented the English National Rugby Team at the U16, U18 and U20 levels. Was selected to the British and Irish Lions squad, the highest honor as a rugby player. His 82 Premiership Rugby tries (touchdowns) ranks third on the league's all-time list. A projected running back, he has high athletic ability and a versatile skill set.

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