

# MICHAEL SAM

b. January 7, 1990

## FOOTBALL PLAYER

*“I’m not afraid to tell the world who I am.”*

**He is the first openly gay player drafted by the NFL and signed by the CFL.**

In 2014 Michael Sam became the first openly gay player drafted by the NFL. The defensive end was drafted by the St. Louis Rams and spent time on the Dallas Cowboys practice squad. He signed with the Montreal Alouettes in 2015, but stepped away from the team just months later, citing “personal reasons.”

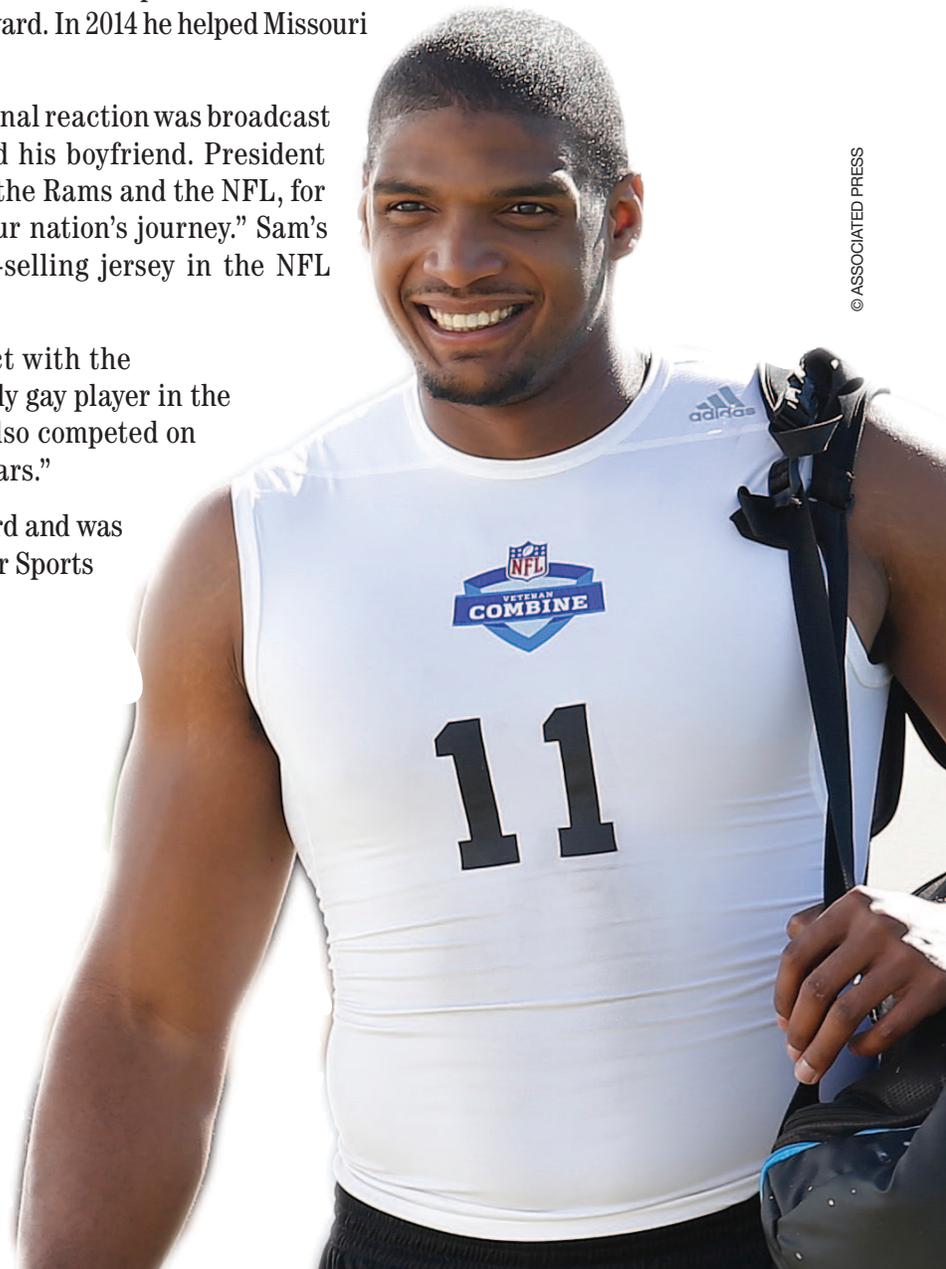
The native Texan overcame a difficult childhood, living at one point in his mother’s car. Sam showed talent for football in high school, where he played both defensive and offensive tackle. He was offered several scholarships and chose to attend the University of Missouri to play for the Tigers. He is the first of his family to attend college.

Sam was named first-team All-American by the Walter Camp Football Foundation and was a semifinalist for the Chuck Bednarik Award. In 2014 he helped Missouri beat Oklahoma State in the Cotton Bowl Classic.

When Sam was drafted into the NFL, his emotional reaction was broadcast on national television, during which he kissed his boyfriend. President Barack Obama congratulated him, along with the Rams and the NFL, for “taking an important step forward today in our nation’s journey.” Sam’s name and number 96 became the sixth-best-selling jersey in the NFL that season.

In 2015, when Sam signed a two-year contract with the Montreal Alouettes, it made him the first openly gay player in the Canadian Football League (CFL). In 2015 he also competed on the 20th season of ABC’s “Dancing With the Stars.”

Sam has received the Arthur Ashe Courage Award and was named GQ’s Man of the Year. He was a finalist for Sports Illustrated’s Sportsman of the Year.



© ASSOCIATED PRESS

**lgbt**<sup>™</sup>  
HISTORY  
MONTH

[www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com](http://www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com)

Copyright ©2015 – A Project of Equality Forum