



Multi-Million Dollar Meat Market. Make it or Miss.

By Kerry Schmidt 04-29-07

By the time you read this, we will be well into the second day of the second most important day of the NFL. The draft.

I only say that because a number of NFL executives say it is so. And, the TV ratings for the two day telecast also show it.

Last year, the eight hour first day show drew ratings of 4.7, with the first three hours averaging 5.8.

That is higher than NBA playoff games, NASCAR, golf, the Saturday afternoon college football game on ESPN and other sporting events.

Monday night football drew ratings last year of 9.9. Thus, the first three hours of the draft are more than half the ratings for the MNF game.

Ernie Accorsi, a 30 + year personnel executive with the Colts, Browns and Giants, says, "It's bigger than the playoffs and the conference championship games. Only the Super Bowl is bigger."

With the coming of TV coverage, the internet blogging and a zillion mock drafts, virtually every fan follows at least part of it.

And then you have the whackos.

Those big, fat beer-bellied idiots decked out in their team's jerseys and cheesheads – Viking antlers, whatever.

These freaks start lining up in front of Radio City Music Hall in N.Y. at 5 A.M. to get into the show. And you can hear them cheer – or boo loudly when their team makes a selection. There are some people who need to get a life.

Most fans know, of course, that they will never be a Peyton Manning, but most are drunk enough to think they can pick the next Manning better than the so called team's experts. And you know what? Sometimes they can.

Only go back as far as last season. The Houston Texans passed on Reggie Bush to take Mario Williams. He had a so-so year, but look at Bush's season and his future.

The point is that picking correctly can make or break your team. And those hired to make these choices. They chose wrong a couple of times, goodbye.

You don't draft well, you don't win games. Five teams have failed to make the playoffs the last five years and four of these five had the worst drafting records in that time span. The unexplained exception is Detroit's Matt Millen. He is in his 10th season at the helm, and has yet to really do anything. He must have some pictures of the owner or something. These five team have only seven draftees in the last five years that are starters, and 6 of the 9 they drafted in 2002 are out of football.

As recent as 10-15 years ago, the draft day was fairly normal. Today, it actually lasts for about six weeks. The combine, all the individual workouts, interviews, etc, etc. are mega-media events in themselves.

You have the player's agents and spokespersons and other hype-em-up types who exclaim the greatness of this or that player. Hell, an individual workout for a player can



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bring over a thousand fans just to watch him run the forty and a couple of other things. They probably watch raptly the interviews the pro people conduct with them. And when these final 2 days arrive, you have many of the players on hand, along with family and friends, oops, you must now call his followers his entourage now that he is a celebrity. And I can assure you every emotion possible ebbs and flows with the words "...and with the # pick, the (team) picks..."

It is the ultimate in reality TV, mainly because it is live, not some taped show from days or weeks ago.

Yes, draft day has really morphed into a giant dollar sign, complete with the careers of young men and old coaches and staffs at stake.

Accorsi says he remembers the first time ESPN came to then Commissioner Pete Rozelle and told him that they wanted to put it on TV. Rozelle's quizzical look was quickly followed by one word. "Why?"

I think it is safe to say that question has been answered.

Now I could go into the many failures in this process, such as Brian Leaf, Brian Bosworth, Tony Manderich and others, but that is worthy of a different column in itself. Along with the people who lost their jobs after giving millions to the above losers. Then in the final 2 days, teams bet many million dollars on all the efforts they have expended.

Draft day is like opening day of the baseball season. An entire year's optimistic outlook on things can hinge on these meatheads they pay the big bucks to. All 32 teams are undefeated on draft day.

Some chose correctly, some fall on their heads.

Bill Polian, the President of the Colts, said, "you simply cannot make a mistake at the top of the draft, or there's a very good chance it will set your franchise back years and cost you your career."

Thus, needless to say, draft day has changed greatly since the days when a player received a call from the team a few days after the fact.

Now, in the last couple of weeks leading up to this mega orgasm, the sports pages have been full of details on virtually all the top players, and some who are questionable.

But even more so, according to one source on the net, there are "well over 200 different mock drafts."

So, I went to said net to see which was best, and various articles said that one Mel Kiper Jr. was THE guru of the drafts. So, I googled him in and went to his mock draft.

Guess what? He must be big, because I could not see it without joining his web page for \$35!

Now I'm sure that some publication has it somewhere, but screw it, I'll just grab any of the zillions of freebees.

But while looking one last time for Kiper's, I read that last year, he only picked 8 of the 32 picks correctly. So much for \$35.

Thus, I came up with two. One is a consensus of Sports Illustrated and 2 other mocks, and then one from me. Yes, I know enough of this crap to make up my own.

But before I bedazzle you with my mockery of a draft, here is the SI and friends combo. As if you give a damn.



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No. 1, JaMarcus Russell, Raiders. 2, Calvin Johnson, Detroit (Millen gets another chance to screw up. 3, Brady Quinn, Cleveland; 4, Joe Thomas, Tampa Bay; 5, Gaines Adams, Arizona; 6, Amboi Okoye, Redskins; 7, Adrian Peterson, Vikings; 8, LaRon Landry, Falcons; 9, Levi Brown, Miami; 10, Leon Hall, Houston; 11, Adam Carriker, Niners; 12, Patrick Willis, Buffalo; 13, Alan Branch, Rams; 14, Greg Olsen, Carolina; 15.....oh shit, who the hell cares about all these guys. They'll make millions holding out and still say they are being underpaid. Screw 'em.

Plus, I'm tired of writing this crap, so let's quickly get on to my mocking draft and end this damn mockery of a show.

Raiders, Donald Duck. Al Davis' dementia really quacks me up. Detroit, Pluto. Millen is so far out there...Cleveland, Nobody. They will not get their pick in in time like 3 years ago. TB, Mike Tyson. Gruden likes fighters. Arizona, Harry the Gila Monster.

Washington, Hillary Clinton. She has thighs and legs big enough for a number of positions.

Minnihaha, Paul Bunyan and the Love Boat (they have 2 choices). Atlanta, Brett Favres's daughter (because they let Favre get away for nothing many years ago. Miami. Flipper. Houston. Walker, Walker, Texas Ranger. San Francisco. A 6'6' transvestite. He will add to attendance in the land of Tinker Bells.

Buffalo. A Zamboni. St Louis, Mark McGuire. Steroids are free in the NFL.

Carolina, Onmy Mind. Pittsburgh Steelers. Arasmus M. Thief

Green Bay, an 8-foot cheese head. Jacksonville, A. Mercedes.

Cincinnati, Pete Rose. Tennessee, Peyton Manning. Giants, Cooper Manning. Denver, John Elway's 6-year old son. They're really drafting "for the future."

Dallas, Exact clone of Jerry Jones. Ego is always top draft choice for Jerry. Kansas City, Hereii Come. New England, Paul Revere. Jets, Getonna Airplane. Eagles, Any quarterback. Saints, Anybody but Katrina. New England, Paul Revere's horse. Baltimore, Edgar Allen Poe. San Diego, a new coach. Chicago, see Eagles, and last, and thank God, least, the Colts. A mare.

Ok, I may not be correct, but my picks are more interesting. All the other mock drafts, "who gives a f..."

For those of you who will actually sit in front of a TV and watch this damn thing, listen to John Belushi in the classic movie, "Animal House."

"Take my advice, drink heavily!"