



The much anticipated and hyped NFL draft is over.

by Kerry Schmidt 05-06-2007

I am writing this column Thursday, since I have been notified by my wife that I must drive up to Memphis, leaving Friday, getting up at 4 A.M. to do so. Given the state of my back, it should be a great trip. But I will tough it out. I will take as many narcotic pills as required to pretty much knock me out for the duration, so it will be just fine! Heavy drugs. I don't recommend it for everyone, but it sure as hell works for me. Thank you Hunter Thompson.

THANK GOD the draft is finally over.

I am a huge NFL fan, but I cannot possibly understand all the hype and VERY boring hours of TV coverage on this meat market called the draft. Only draft I care about is a cold one poured into an ice cold mug.

However, now all the choices have been made, and all that is left, for the teams, is to get ready to shell out millions of bucks.

The No.1 overall choice, JaMarcus Russell, picked by the Oakland Raiders, will thus be in line for the biggest sign on bonus.

Based on the last three years and the increases from year to year, Russell can expect to receive between 15-20 million up front!

The 32nd first rounder can expect somewhere between 3-5 million. Thus, the best calculated guess that I can come up with is that the 32 teams will shell out somewhere between 220 and 240 million in up front money for the first rounders. Who know how much for the remainder of the meats.

Now, it is time to get the office pools going. Which team will have the first player to get arrested. Which will have the most criminals? And, what will be the total number of new jailbirds for the season.

Note: There already have been 7. Just kidding, but you can be pretty sure there will be some.

Obviously the brain trusts that made these picks hope they were right. First off, because it will greatly help their team, and secondly, it will greatly help them keep their jobs.

We have all heard of the "can't miss" tag put on players, and they became busts. See Ryan Leaf, QB of San Diego in the 1998 draft.

And on the other side, just last year, look at the Saints, who picked WR Marques Colston with the 255th pick in the draft. He is already a star. So, as you can see, it is nothing but an educated crap shoot.

Taking a quick look at the best and worst drafts of recent years past.

While the Chargers had the No. 1 worst in '98, they also had the No.1 best in 2004. Among others, they picked Drew Brees and LaDainian Tomlinson, and QB Philip Rivers, among seven starters.

Next, the Bengals. While half their team is now in jail or in court proceedings, they did very well in 2001. They got Pro-Bowler Justin Smith, offensive line, Pro-Bowler WR Chad Johnson, and another 4-year starter, WR T.J. Houshmandzadeh (Needs a wide back to get his name on it).



In 2005 the Eagles drafted five current starters.

Also in 2001, the Panthers got four starters, including top rated WR Steve Smith, and he helped them to the 2003 Super Bowl.

Another 2001 hot shot draft was Buffalo. They got five starters, two of which made the Pro-Bowl. Trouble was they mismanaged the salary cap and lost all of them to other teams.

The rest of the worst.

2001 seems to have been a magical draft, good and bad. The Vikings do not have a single player on its team from that year.

IN 2003, the Browns drafted Jeff Faine No. 1. He did not make the team. In the last seven years, of the 61 players drafted, 27 are out of the league and only two remain on the roster, both reserves.

In 2004, the Packers got a draft that got head coach/GM Mike Sherman fired. Their top 2 drafts were busts, and they dared pick a punter at No. 3, and he was also quickly gone. Ah, the Saints. They probably have had, by far, more terrible drafts than any team in the league. But 1999 is the infamous one. Ricky Williams, was the No 1 pick, his wedding gown was No 2. and for that they gave up their entire eight choices. Mike Ditka was also quickly gone.

Remember last week how I tried to quote several of the “experts” mock drafts, and though Mel Kiper Jr. is supposedly the best, I found out he only picked 8 of 32 correct last year. Well, his is consistent, since that’s all he did this year also.

Now, in the “who the hell cares” category, a consensus graded the best and worst drafts, by teams.

Atlanta, San Francisco and Cleveland each got an A+. Carolina and Oakland received A’s and Buffalo, Detroit and Tampa Bay each got an A-.

On the back end, Denver and Seattle received D’s, and Miami, Baltimore, Houston and KC all got C-. The rest are in between. Hey, the C- was an improvement for Houston. Remember last year, they passed on Reggie Bush for Mario Williams.

But as we know, only time will tell how these present ratings will turn out. (See above best and worst).

Among other lists, are the 10 best players that were not drafted.

Remember the past? Kurt Warner, Priest Holmes, Adam Vinaitari, Antonio Gates, Jeff Garcia and Mike Vanderjagt, were among the recent not-draftees.

Way back when some guy named Johnny Unites was not drafted.

The top 10 list of players not drafted this year are Darius Walker, RB from Notre Dame, who signed a free-agent contract with Chicago. Rhema McKnight, Notre Dame receiver. Michigan State WR, Matt Trannon. The 6’ 6” incher with huge hands got a free-agent contract with St. Louis.

Jessie Daniels, a safety from LSU, free-agent signee by St Louis. Line Backer San Olajubutu (he needs to be in the league just for the name) from Arkansas was free-agent picked by Carolina.

Gabe Hall, OT from Texas Tech, was projected by many as a 5th round pick, but he is still waiting to hear from some team. Corey Anderson, fullback from Tennessee was a free-agent signee for Houston. De’Andre Jackson, a CB from Iowa State, was projected by



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some as a first round pick, but tore up his ACL late in the 2006 season, an injury that cost him millions.

And my favorite, is Jaren Zabransky, Boise State QB (free agent to Vikings)

Anyone who watched the incredible Fiesta Bowl in January, had to marvel at this guy. Bouncing back from an interception/TD return late in the game, he roared back for 3 scores and a 2-point conversion to upset Oklahoma. One of the most exciting games I've ever seen.

What draft review would be complete without Mr. Irrelevant, so named as being the last (255th) player chosen in the draft. Ramzee Robinson, Alabama cornerback has that honor this year.

As always, Mr. Irrelevant will take place in the Lowsman's Trophy celebration, held in Newport Beach in June. It is the Irrelevant Week's answer to the Heisman.

It's a long-standing tradition, and Robinson said he will be there for the 5-day festivities, adding, "It's a tradition. I'm pretty sure I'm going to learn a lot about it in the next week or so.

Finishing up with this draft crap, a couple of individual players who interest me.

I mentioned Amobi Okoye last week in my column. The defensive lineman was drafted No. 10 in the first round by Houston.

Some of the things that make him interesting are that he is just 19 years old, the youngest player ever to be drafted.

He was born in Nigeria and moved to the US at age 12. They tested him to see what grade he should be put into in American schools, and he tested out at the 9th grade level.

As such, he graduated from high school at 15. He was accepted to Harvard, but chose Louisville because it has good academics and a good football program.

He graduated from Louisville at 18, with a degree in psychology, magna-cum-laude, and now, the 6'1", 300 pound Okoye is ready to join all the "grown men" in the Houston training camp.

This is a young KID you really want to root for.

The other interesting guy is Walter Thomas, a free-agent signee by the New Orleans Saints.

Up front, you would say he is a "don't touch" individual. After signing to play at Oklahoma State in 2004, he soon flunked out. He then sat out a year and ended up playing just two games for Northwest Mississippi Jr. College in the 2006 season. That ended when he was arrested for conspiracy to commit robbery.

Whoa, you say. Why would anyone even think about looking at a guy who only played two games in junior college, flunked out of Oklahoma State and ran afoul of the law?

Well, for one, according to his Jr. College coach, Randy Pippin, he comes from a really good family, all of them clean and no problems. His parents were great basketball players.

Still, WHY?

Saints Coach Sean Peyton said, "Normally, a guy with just two games would absolutely have no chance at an NFL tryout." He added that "because of some of (his) characteristics, you take a look at him in a rookie camp."



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Those “characteristics” are: He is 6’5’, 370 pounds, and runs a 4.9 40-yard dash. He squats 850 pounds. He is very athletic. He can walk five yards on his hands and do back and front flips. In his two games, yes, albeit Jr. college, he had 19 tackles, 11 for losses. “He’s a hell of an athlete, no doubt about it,” Pippin said. Pippin called him “a dadgum Russian gymnast.”

Peyton said that he and the Saints had explored the robbery charges in great detail and are convinced that “it will be quickly resolved and we are satisfied with our investigations.”

The odds against Thomas are huge, but this “freak of nature” is at least an interesting scenario to add to the usually boring rookie camp.

Finally, we are through with the gambling and, yes, we are “READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL.”

Me, I’m ready to start on my trip medication. Good stuff.