

NFL Network Media

Conference

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Mike Mayock

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us today on the second of two NFL Network NFL Draft media conference calls. Joining me on the call today is NFL Network's lead analyst for the 2017 NFL Draft, the Emmy-nominated Mike Mayock.

A few quick NFL media programming notes around the 2017 NFL Draft before we begin. Starting Sunday, NFL Network will provide 76 hours of live draft week coverage. NFL Network's draft coverage will feature 20 NFL team war room cameras, including the Cleveland Browns, who hold the number one overall pick.

All of NFL Network's 2017 NFL Draft coverage will be available digitally across platforms, allowing fans to watch the entirety of the excitement from every pick from every round live from Philadelphia on their favorite devices. Fans can watch NFL Network live on their smartphone, tablet, PC, or connected device.

NFL Now Live Presented by Courtyard is the only way to watch each and every pick of the draft live from Rounds 1 through 7. NFL Now Live can be accessed through the official mobile app of the NFL, NFL Mobile from Verizon, as well as through tablets, PCs, or connected devices.

In addition to NFL Network hosts, analysts and draft experts, Stanford head coach, David Shaw, will join NFL Network's coverage of the 2017 NFL Draft for the sixth consecutive year.

Finally, for those media on the call who will be in Philadelphia next week to cover the draft, NFL Network is hosting a media luncheon on Wednesday, April 26th, at 12 noon Eastern time at the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel, located at 201 North 17th Street in the Horizons Ballroom.

Mike, along with Charles Davis, Daniel Jeremiah, Steve Mariucci, Steve Smith Sr., Brian Billick, Maurice Jones-Drew, Ike Taylor, and Stanford head coach David Shaw will be in attendance and available for interviews.

For more information on the media luncheon, please email Andrew Howard at andrew.howard@nfl.com. And now I'll turn it over to the moderator to take questions for Mike.



NETWORK

Q. Mike, Rueben Foster has had a less than ideal predraft process. You recently still had him as your top inside linebacker. I'm just curious how far these red flags of both the character and injury issues rechecked at the combine could have him sliding in your mind?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, there are some red flags there. I think the combine incident has been wiped clean by almost every team. I think that was way overdone, and the kid should not been sent home. That's my opinion. And most people in the league believe that.

As far as the diluted sample at the combine, that's always really disappointing. It has to be taken into consideration. I think the shoulder is apparently going to be okay from a re-check perspective. I don't see him sliding all that far. I think he's a top 20 pick all day long in any draft. Could he have been a top 10 pick? He still might be a top 10 pick.

So I think the interesting thing is that Haason Reddick has made up so much ground in this process that the two of them are considered pretty closely together at this point. But I still think Foster is a top 20 pick all day long.

Q. Titans sitting there with two first-round picks, 5 and 18. Based on their need and players available, what does an ideal first round look like to the Titans?

MIKE MAYOCK: I think it's a defensive back at 5, Lattimore or Adams. And I think it's a wide receiver at 18. There are three of them. They're all different. I think any one of the three could fit what Tennessee does. Because whether it's speed, whether it's size, whatever, I think it's Lattimore/Adams at 5 and one of the three top wideouts at 18.

Q. I'm curious about this receiver class. There doesn't seem to be a consensus in terms of who is the best receiver in this class. Who, in your mind, is your favorite, and for the Lions who makes the most sense there at 21 if one were to fall?

MIKE MAYOCK: You see the question is difficult this year because there's only one that's right now clean. When I say clean, I mean no injury concerns or character or anything, and that's Mike Williams. He's the big body, 6'3", 218-pound guy that ran 4.55, and that's plenty.

I don't have any speed concerns about him. And I think he's today's NFL's next receiver. He can throw the back shoulder fade, red zone, et cetera, quick slants. I love what he brings from a competitive standpoint to the game.

John Ross, I don't care if he runs 4.22 or 4.32 or 4.42, I mean, he flies. The concern there, and there are some teams that have pushed him down the board or off the board because of injury, he's got the surgery on his shoulder, he's had surgery on both knees, and he's got a small frame. So the durability is a big issue with him right now.

But I love the fact that he can step in day one and help both as a return guy and as a receiver. He puts the ball in the end zone. And I'm a huge fan of John Ross.

And then Corey Davis hasn't been able to work out because of his ankle. And there are some concerns about the ankle, the fact that he comes from a mid-major conference, which doesn't bother me at all. I think you watch the tape, I don't think he's a 4.4 guy. I think he's 4.48, 4.50. But all three of those guys are going to go somewhere between 10 and 22 or 23.

So I don't think you're going to have a choice of three receivers in Detroit. I think if you're Detroit, you just kind of take a look at all three of these guys and decide what you think that you're seeing best.

Q. With Solomon Thomas, first and foremost, what is the biggest thing that jumps off the tape? Also, Ryan Pace of the Bears talks often about juggling draft decisions in regards to how special a player is versus how deep that position is in the draft. When it comes to Adams and Hooker are safety, are either of those guys worth the No. 3 pick overall when you factor in the depth of the safety class this year?

MIKE MAYOCK: So the Solomon Thomas question, I think what jumps off tape is his interior twitch. By that I mean when you look at a guy like Aaron Donald and what he does inside in sub-pass rush situations, that's a best-case scenario. I'm not saying he's Aaron Donald. He's 12 pounds lighter than Donald. I think he's a base defensive end on first down that kicks inside in your sub-packages. But it's that interior twitch and ability to push the pocket from the inside out that makes him special. And I think he's a top 10 pick all day long because of that.

As far as the safety class is concerned, this is my personal take, I love Malik Hooker. I think he's the best center field free safety I've seen in a while on tape. But I have two concerns. Number one is the durability.

He's a one-year starter at Ohio State. He's coming off two surgeries after the season, and you've got to worry about his durability.

Number two, he's an inconsistent tackler. And if you're going to play him at single high safety, one of his main jobs is going to be tackling. He's the last line of defense, and he's highly inconsistent, which worries me.

I think Adams is the more secure of the two picks of the two safeties, and I have no reservations about his game whatsoever. I just don't think he's going to get his hands on as many footballs in the middle of the field as Hooker would have.

So can you take the safety at 2? Of course. I think you've got a difference maker inside with Thomas or Jonathan Allen. But I think Jamal Adams is a top 5 pick.

Q. About Myles Garrett at the Browns at one? Are you sold with him? How do you compare him to pass-rushers from the past years? Are you confident the Browns will stay there and just take him?

MIKE MAYOCK: I've been on record from day one saying I think they have to take him at number one. You can continue to try to move down the board all you want and pick up more picks, and I get that and I respect that. But at some point you better start taking some difference makers, and I think he's a difference maker.

If you compare him to Von Miller who came out of the same college four or five years ago, this kid has the same explosion off the ball, the same bend, the ability to pressure a quarterback. And he's 20 pounds heavier.

So I think his upside is he should be a Pro Bowl defensive end. He should be a huge difference maker in the NFL in the pass game. The only way that doesn't happen is one of two reasons: one, he gets hurt, or, number two, he doesn't want it bad enough. But his physical talent is awesome.

Q. Follow-up on Garrett. Couple weeks ago (indiscernible) had some pretty critical things to say about Garrett. Said he hasn't seen Garrett's athleticism translate enough in the playmaking ability, and he said that when he looks at Garrett's tape, he sees a tremendous athlete but doesn't see a guy who enjoys getting hit play after play. Do you buy any of that?

MIKE MAYOCK: I think if you watch the first tape of the season, which was UCLA when he was completely

healthy, you come away going: I have absolutely no problems with this kid's game. He dominated the game, maybe not in the stat column, but he dominated that football team.

The more tape you watch, you see offensive line sliding toward him, taking tight ends into the running backs into his size, and he had to be double- and triple-teamed all year long, and he had to do it playing through a high-ankle sprain. He missed two games with that. Played through it with Tennessee and Alabama.

So from my perspective, did I always see the same consistent explosion off the ball? No, I didn't. But I think there's a reason behind that, and I think it's because of the ankle.

Again, I keep going back to that UCLA tape and saying this is when he was 100% healthy and didn't have the high ankle. If this is the guy you're getting, that's an All-Pro defensive end.

And I understand the tapes are a little bit up-and-down, but I'm willing to live with that based on what I know about what he played through this season.

Q. As you look at the top four quarterbacks available in this draft, how would you compare them from a scouting standpoint to Christian Hackenberg coming out last year, just in terms of what you noticed? Those four guys and what you noticed in Christian?

MIKE MAYOCK: Hackenberg last year, his tape from his last two years in college was not very good. It was highly inconsistent at best. You can go back to that first year under Bill O'Brien and say look what he was, and you could also say that Penn State didn't protect him, he got hit too often.

What I said about Hackenberg a year ago is you could find a throw or two or three off every one of his tapes where you go: Wow. That's a big-time NFL throw. But the majority of the tape was poor from a decision-making perspective all the way through -- accuracy, consistency, decision-making. So Hackenberg to me was like this puzzle that had to be unravelled, and I don't know if it will ever happen.

As far as the quarterbacks in this year's class, I'm not banging the table for any of them. I think there's talent in the class, but I think it's going to take a year for most of these guys.

I've got Deshaun Watson ranked number one. I think he plays his best football when the lights are brightest. I love the kid's attitude, his leadership and the way his

teammates respond to him. What I don't like is 17 interceptions on a National Championship team. Throws way too many interceptions, and he's also going to have to deal with the whole spread quarterback conversion to a pocket NFL quarterback. That's a big challenge.

Mitch Trubisky, ironically, might be the most ready to play quarterback in this class. And he's only a one-year starter. Like his pocket awareness. Think he has good feet and quick release. Don't think he's got a ceiling as high as some of the other guys, but I think he can become a solid NFL starter.

Pat Mahomes is a pure gunslinger. Makes a lot of mistakes. Technique breaks down, throws interceptions. But every single play something either really good or really bad is about to happen. I think he's an exciting talent. I like the fact that he's an athlete. He was a high school baseball player that was drafted. He was a high school point guard. I think he's got an innate feel for the game. And if you can coach out some of the incompetent consistencies, I think you could have a special player, but it's going to take time.

DeShone Kizer I've got as my fourth guy. I think he's a late 1 to mid 2. I think he's a year or two away from playing, but he's the prototypical NFL starting quarterback -- size, arm strength, athletic ability. I just think his pocket awareness and pocket mechanics break down too often at critical times.

Q. This is said to be a deep running back class with three possibly going in the first round. Are college teams doing a better job of developing running backs for the NFL, or is the NFL just getting better at developing what the colleges are presenting to them?

MIKE MAYOCK: I just think it's a confluence of a couple different things. If you look at recent history, there's only been six first round running backs in the last five years. Ezekiel Elliott, Gurley, and Gordon were the last three taken, and I would say all three of them are high-level running backs. I like all three of those guys. Nobody was drafted in '14 or '13.

You go back to '12 and it was Trent Richardson, I think, Doug Martin and David Wilson. So all three of those -- I mean two of them are out of the league I think and one of them is on suspension.

So you look, it's either been a hit or miss thing with first round running backs. I think the talent this year is Fournette, who is an old-school guy, and McCaffrey, Cook, and Mixon are all kind of today's NFL backs.

So to answer your question directly, I think what we're

getting out of college football is more of the scatbacks that can catch the ball well. They're 200 to 210, 212 pounds. They catch the ball well in the pass game. They understand the pass game, and they're all space players.

I think the NFL has done a nice job of understanding what that is and adapting to it because there aren't a whole lot of Adrian Peterson's and Leonard Fournette's out there.

Q. You broke down the top of the wide receiver class earlier. I'm looking at a guy that's maybe in the next tier, Isaiah Ford from Virginia Tech. What do you like about him, what do you project for him? If you have a minute, the same for the quarterback, Jerod Evans, did he make the right call coming out this year?

MIKE MAYOCK: I don't know why Evans came out this year. And I always preface these comments: I don't know anything about his personal situation and I'm only commenting on pure football. From a pure football perspective, he's not ready for the NFL. He's highly inconsistent from an accuracy perspective and I felt like needed at least one more year, and I don't think he's going to get drafted.

As far as Isaiah Ford is concerned, I like Isaiah Ford. Very quick, gets in and out of plays. Didn't run as well at the combine as we all expected he would run. But he catches the ball, he's very consistent. I think he's either going to go mid to late third round or early fourth round.

Q. You have the Dallas Cowboys picking at 28, and Charles Harris, Takk McKinley, and T.J. Watt are all there. Who do you think is the best fit for Dallas, and your thoughts of those three guys playing a 4-3 D-end?

MIKE MAYOCK: You have Takk McKinley, Charles Harris and Watt, are those the three you mentioned?

Q. Yes, sir.

MIKE MAYOCK: I'm not sure they'll be there. Charles Harris has picked up some steam. I would expect him to be gone before that. But if he was there, I'd think he'd be a great pick for them, especially from -- in addition to talent, he's got an awful lot of talent, and he gets in that three-point stance and he goes. He's a long guy, plays hard. Got a great work ethic. He's really good off the field, high-character guy. If Charles Harris was there, I think he'd make a ton of sense.

Takk McKinley from UCLA, you can say the same things about how hard he plays, what kind of kid he is. He's coming off shoulder surgery and had a couple concussions. So there are some medical issues

around him. I think once you get past that, and most teams have, if he's there at 28, he makes some sense.

He doesn't bend as well as Harris. He's a little stiffer, but he's really an explosive, straight line player.

And T.J. Watt, it's interesting, because he's only a one-year starter. He was a tight end. He had two knee operation surgeries in college. Didn't get on the field as a starter until last year. He shows twitch, toughness, and quickness. He's got some length. The 4-3 teams think he can play 4-3. The 3-4 teams think they can play outside linebacker. He's obviously got some bloodlines which are legit. He plays really hard. I've got him in the second round, but if you're sitting there in the first round and you've got to have that position, T.J. Watt can play.

Q. Obviously the Eagles sit at 14, and it seems to be a pretty good spot for them. First off, is that a good spot for them? Then at the cornerback position, we hear how deep it is, but is there a guy who you think is going to be available then that's worthy of that pick?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I think the issue is there are two injuries at the cornerback position in pro-day workouts. So Sidney Jones, who, I think, would have been an ideal selection for the Eagles at 14, tore his Achilles. Fabian Moreau from UCLA tore his pec. So everything gets pushed down a little bit.

So if Lattimore is off the board in the first five, six, seven picks, like he probably will be, the next guy up for me is Conley. And I don't know if Conley gets to 14.

If Conley doesn't get to 14, the next guy for me is Marlon Humphrey. And I love everything about Marlon Humphrey except he struggled to find the football in the air with his back to the quarterback. That's a huge deal.

So I look at it this way. If Conley's on the board at 14, you have to compare him to the best play maker on offense on your board. Because I'm not convinced the Eagles should go defense, to be honest with you. If Conley's not there, I think you want to get your corner in the second or third round. I think you need two corners.

But my perspective is you drafted Carson Wentz, you better support him. You signed two wideouts in free agency, they're both effectively one-year contracts, your slot receiver, Matthews, is in the final year of his deal. Celek, the tight end, is 32 years old.

From my perspective, I sit there and say, okay, this year looks okay. But get a running back. Get a McCaffrey

or Dalvin Cook. Get a tight end. O.J. Howard. Get whoever of those wideouts that you like.

So I would be comparing Conley to the highest play maker I've got on the board offensively. And I might be leaning towards offense, if it was me.

Q. Two players I wanted to ask you about, one was Harris from Missouri. Do you see him as a 3-4 or 4-3 guy? And then Taco Charlton from Michigan, how big of a sack producer can he be in the NFL, or is he more of a left end type?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I think Charles Harris can play in either a 3-4 or 4-3. It's interesting, because the edge rush group this year between Barnett, McKinley, Harris, Watt, all four of those guys could kind of fit. I think they fit the 3-4 thing very well. But I think they've played enough 4-3 end where they've got enough size and length to at least play in sub-package downs. I think Charles Harris is one of those guys.

As far as Taco Charlton is concerned, he's intriguing. I wonder why he didn't play more football prior to this year. He's got length, he's got power, he's got athletic ability. He doesn't have the twitch. Like I wanted him to be Carlos Dunlap because they're very similar size. Dunlap ran 4.72, and Charlton ran 4.92.

So what you see on tape is what I saw at the combine where he doesn't quite have the twitch of an elite edge rusher, so I think he's more of a base 3-4 end. And there is nothing wrong with that. You can be a good football player that plays eight to ten years in the league, and I've got a second round grade on him.

Q. What's the scouting lesson that can be taken from Dak Prescott falling to the fourth round last year, the things that maybe were missed? What should teams do now if they're trying to find the next Dak, whether that's in this draft or future years?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, it's an interesting question. I think what a lot of people forget is that Dak had that DUI before the draft last year. And I think that pushed him down a little bit. Some teams that really liked the kid, really liked the football player got nervous when that happened very close to the draft. We all forget that now because of what happened last year during the season.

From a scouting perspective, without turning this into a five-minute answer, what's intriguing to me is we kind of lump all these college quarterbacks under this, quote, spread system. But there are a whole bunch of different spread systems out there. Some spread the run, some spread the throw, some throw down the field. Some throw intermediate. Some throw nothing

but bubble screens, funnel screens and verts.

So you've got to understand what this quarterback was capable of doing coming out of college. And I think the NFL's doing a better job of taking what the kid knew out of college, and instead of saying, hey, kid, here's our playbook, they take what the kid can do and try to build the pass offense around that. And I think that's a pretty big deal.

I think the NFL's doing a better job of that. I think that's the most important scouting point right now. What do you do well? You look at Deshaun Watson, you know? And how do you get him on the field quickly? And what people don't understand is a lot of these college kids have had no pre-snap responsibilities. In other words, the whole team looks -- 11 guys look over to the sideline at those funky placards. They get the play. The quarterback doesn't call protections. They're never in the huddle. He's not changing plays. They're just automated robots. And you go in the NFL and there is all this pre-snap responsibility. So you've got to understand the mental side.

When you look at Dak Prescott, he was a smart kid. His offense did some intermediate and deep throws. It wasn't just all tunnels and whatever. And he didn't turn the football over, which was really key to me. Even though his front was overwhelmed a bunch. He didn't turn the ball over, which was reflected this year with four interceptions and four fumbles lost. Eight total turnovers for a rookie quarterback is crazy.

So I think there's a bunch of different things, and we're all trying to learn as we continue to evaluate the spread offense at all the positions.

Q. Obviously, the Giants at 23, there is a lot of talk they might want to have a tight end. What do you think the chances are that a guy like O.J. Howard could fall to them at 23?

MIKE MAYOCK: O.J. Howard's a great conversation because I think he's a future Greg Olson. That's who I see. He ran 4.51 at 251 pounds, which is outstanding. He can get down the field intermediate at deep. He's tough enough to catch the ball in the crowd. He can catch the ball in-line, and he can catch the ball from a displaced position. There aren't many of those guys around anymore. There aren't many of the Olsons, Wittens, et cetera, and that's who he can develop into.

The problem is sometimes people don't place enough value on that. I don't think he'll be there at 23. As a matter of fact, if I had to name my top 10, and when my top 100 list comes out next week before the draft, he'll be in the top 10 or 12. That's how good a football player I think he is.

David Njoku is an intriguing conversation, also at 23, and, you know, maybe you're also taking a look at some of those running backs at 23. Because I think, more than anything, you need a play maker. I don't care whether you call them tight ends, running backs, whatever, you need a play maker.

Q. I know part of your job, besides assessing the talent, is sort of assessing the front offices and what kind of players that they like to get, and you match those things together. I'm curious, in a case of a guy like Kyle Shanahan, who is for the first time looking at an entire roster and not just the offensive part of it, what would be an educated guess on what kind of players Kyle's going to like and what the Niners are going to do?

MIKE MAYOCK: As far as which side of the ball?

Q. Both sides. And sort of address the fact of what a different job it is for him to now be entrusted with an entire roster as opposed to just offense.

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I think what we need to understand is that Kyle and John Lynch are now tied at the hip. And I thought John made a great hire with Adam Peters coming over from Denver. He hired Martin Mayhew who was a former GM in Detroit. So I thought John made a couple of really key personnel signings by helping give John some depth in that front office.

As far as Kyle's concerned, he's going to walk in day one and say: I'll play the same kind of defense we just played in Atlanta. Which is the Seattle, blah, blah, blah, single high thing.

So what they're going to want to be on defense, I think, is what Atlanta converted to over the last two years. Atlanta did a great job with Dimitroff and Pioli in converting that entire defense over to the single high thing. And even though the numbers weren't great, it helped them to the Super Bowl.

What it is was they drafted a bunch of speed and toughness. It doesn't matter, if you look at linebacker, they took the kid out of LSU in the second round, Deion Jones. They took Keanu Neal in the first round (indiscernible) trendsetter at safety, which is similar to Seattle with Kam Chancellor and Earl Thomas.

So it's speed at the linebacker position. It's safeties that can flat-out play and tackle, and it's a four-man rush getting off the ball and coming in waves. That's what the defense is all about.

Now, offensively, it's a different conversation. They signed Brian Hoyer, and I think Hoyer is Shanahan's top type of guy. Ball comes out, play action,

understands what to do with it. Obviously not in Matt Ryan's category, and they've remade -- I think they've made more changes on offense because I think -- when I'm talking about free agency, because I think Kyle wanted to get some of his guys, type of guys in there. Pierre Garcon. He had a couple wideouts that could run like Marquise Goodwin and Aldrick Robinson, get Jeremy Zuttah center.

But there is an awful lot. They've got three starting offensive linemen in their 30s. And one of the cardinal sins is you can't let your offensive line get old, ever. So they're trying to sign Gilliam from Seattle.

But what I think you're going to see big picture is a very fast, aggressive, tough team, because that's what got them to the Super Bowl a year ago.

Q. Want to ask you about a few of the Canadians. Offensive tackle from Mississippi State, Justin Senior, looks like probably the only Canadian that has a good chance of being drafted. What do you see in him?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I like Justin Senior. I spent some time watching him. I've got him at the top of the sixth round right now. He's got size. He played at a major college in a major division. Saw him at the East-West game, was impressed with him. I think he's going to be a right tackle at the next level.

Q. Tight end Antony Auclair from Laval and offensive lineman Geoff Gray from the University of Manitoba. They were at the Shrine game. What did you see in them?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I've got Gray as a priority free agent. Don't think he's going to get drafted. But I think he's going to be in somebody's camp.

I think Auclair is really interesting to me. He ran big routes. He's a big, strong, athletic kid that's athletic and tough. But he also happens to face the deepest tight end class in years. I think some teams would love to get him as a priority free agent. But I think there is a chance he could go late in the draft.

Q. Lastly, defensive tackle from UCLA, Eli Ankou, anything on him?

MIKE MAYOCK: I haven't done any work on him. I apologize.

Q. Do you think the Browns would need to move up from 12 to get Trubisky, if that's, indeed, who they would want? Do you think he'd be worth it? If you were calling the shots, would you make a move like that for him?

MIKE MAYOCK: I wouldn't. As a matter of fact, and I've said this a bunch of times, I think most of this

quarterback class should be later down the line, whether it's first round or second round.

However, I think the only wildcard before them is the Jets at No. 6. I don't think Buffalo's going to take one at 10. They might. But the Jets at 6 I think is a huge reach for any quarterback.

But if they fall in love with somebody, they've got to keep swinging because they've done the same thing Cleveland has. They've drafted a bunch of quarterbacks and none of whom have panned out.

You've got to keep swinging. So if you get past Cleveland at 6, it's clear sailing until 12, unless somebody tries to get up ahead of Cleveland. And I'm not even sure at 12 what you do. I'm not sure if you get it -- at No. 12, what if Malik Hooker is still sitting there or Gareon Conley? Is there a chance you want to get another play maker? And then eager wait to trade up until later in the first round because you have draft capital to do it? Or you could even trade up from 33 to 15, 16, wherever, because I don't think there's any -- you could make a case of Washington taking the quarterback, but I doubt it there.

But they have a lot of options open to them. They can go Myles Garrett at 1, Trubisky 12. Or try to get another play maker at 12 and come back and get the quarterback later in the first round. That's one of the beauties of having the draft capital that they have built up.

Q. The Seahawks at 26 obviously have offensive line needs, but they have some defense. From a standpoint of what they'd probably get the best value at in terms of the draft, not looking so much at what their need is, but what might make more sense for them to do there?

MIKE MAYOCK: You're talking about on the defensive side of the ball?

Q. No, whether the offensive line is perceived as the biggest weakness, but the way the defense is regarded as -- the defensive class in this is regarded as so strong, just value-wise it makes more sense to go defense and just try to get an offensive lineman just to get one there?

MIKE MAYOCK: No, I hear you. I think sometimes Tom Cable is so well regarded that they just assume he can continue to work magic with basketball players and defensive tackles and whatever. They drafted Ifedi last year, which I think is a good start.

And they're sitting at 26. As far as if Lamp was there, I'd sprint to the podium. That's how highly I think of him. I think he can play right tackle. I think he'd be

better off playing guard or center. But, regardless, he would upgrade their line and be a day one plug-and-play starter. So if he was around at 26, I'd be all over it.

Now, they've got five in the first 105 or 106 I believe. They've got a little draft capital. They've got the ability to get after it. If you take an offensive lineman at 26, like Lamp, you can come back at 58 or 90 and you could be looking at corners, you could be looking at defensive tackle. He probably could come back in and get a wide receiver perhaps in that third round. So I think a lot of different ways to look at this will be triggered by whatever happens at No. 26.

Q. Do you consider wide receiver to be among the more difficult positions to evaluate? Of the top receivers this year, which one do you think is most ready to make an immediate impact?

MIKE MAYOCK: The receiver thing is an interesting question, okay? So back in 2014, that was the Sammy Watkins, Mike Evans, Odell Beckham, Brandin Cooks, Kelvin Benjamin. They were the five first round picks in 2014. At that point, when they played so well as rookies, I was like: I think we're seeing a change here.

I think what's happening is because of the back shoulder fade, and we're seeing guys with the bigger body guys have immediate success, I think wide receivers have come out running way more routes than they used to. So I thought we were seeing change with the ability to come in and play day one.

Then you go to 2015, and Amari Cooper played great, but Kevin White had injuries. DeVante Parker had injuries. Agholor has been a bust. Perryman has been hurt for two straight years. Dorsett has been up-and-down.

Then you look at last year, Corey Coleman, injuries. Dotson, injuries. Treadwell, one reception, and Will Fuller played well early.

So since that class in '14, the last two classes as far as immediate impact have been minor at best. So it looks like '14 was more of an aberration than a trend.

If you look at the guys this year, I've made the point to everybody that those three top wideouts are all different styles, which I like. If you take the medical away from John Ross, he's going to make plays for you immediately, both in the kick game and the pass game. I don't think there is any doubt about that.

Mike Williams I liked because he's clean, and I know what I'm getting. I'm getting a big bodies guy outside the numbers on back shoulder. Inside the numbers on slant. Red zone weapon. Put the ball in the end zone.

And Corey Davis is a little more of a question mark. Mid-major school, coming off an ankle, all that.

But as you look down the list beyond that, I think Smith-Schuster from USC can be a fairly good receiver year one as he develops, because he's got strength and power. Zay Jones, nothing has been too big for him.

Then you get into guys like Dede Westbrook and Curtis Daniel and what kind of impact they can make as far as big plays.

So I like John Ross and Mike Williams a lot. Just followed by Corey Davis with some question marks.

Q. Of this class of running backs, I'm curious how many of these guys in your opinion are day one guys who can step in and be kind of that every-down back for you? Just the total number of guys in this class you think can step in and do it right away?

MIKE MAYOCK: Well, let me put it this way, the last five years there's been an average of seven running backs go in the first three rounds, which you typically are looking for a three-down back.

This year I've got 11. Once you get past that first group, which would include Joe Mixon, I don't know, Curtis Samuel is more of a wideout. Some people think he's a running back. But in the third round I've got guys like Samaje Perine, Kareem Hunt, Jamaal Williams. I'm not a huge D'Onta Foreman fan, but I think they'll take him somewhere late third round.

But to me they're all three down backs. Foreman might not be a third down back. He might be a first or second round. But we've got 10 or 11 guys right there that I think are three down backs.

You go with the draft, Marlon Mack is probably a three-down back. I look at Donnel Pumphrey as more of a third down change-of-pace guy that I love. You can get into the fourth and fifth round, Wayne Gallman, three down back. James Conner, more of a first and second.

So I think there is depth. There is quality at the top end, and I think there is depth throughout.

Q. I wanted to ask about a couple of UC Berkley prospects, Davis Webb and Chad Hansen, and where they might fit in the draft.

MIKE MAYOCK: Sure, I think Webb has picked up a lot of steam since the Senior Bowl. He came in that week, and he's got a big arm, big body, athletic kid, and he just gripped it. I think that took him from the fringes where people go, Ah, he couldn't beat out Mahomes at Texas Tech, he goes to Cal, they've got that system at

Cal. He's just a system guy. And people say, Wow, big, strong kid can rip it.

Since then, I think it's been nothing but positives for him. I was not at his pro day because I had to be somewhere else that day. But I had four or five quarterback coaches text me or call me and say, Wow, in the rain out here, the kid ripped it. Really impressive.

So I think he's going in the second round. I think he's an intriguing quarterback for a team that already has a starter toward the end of his career. Think of Arizona with a 38-year-old Carson Palmer. Think of New Orleans with the Drew Brees. Think of New York with an Eli Manning, Pittsburgh, et cetera, et cetera. I think -- I love him as a second round pick developing behind a starter.

As far as Hansen, he ran, I believe, 4.52. We all thought he was going to run in the 4.4. Doesn't matter. 4.52 is fast enough. One-year starter, transfer. I think he's going to go in the third or fourth round. And he's a competitive kid with really good hands. Gets in and out of his breaks. Some teams think he's going to be inside of the slot. Some teams think he's outside. But I think that versatility will help him.

Q. This is related to a question you answered earlier about the Eagles and the cornerback at No. 14. The past five or six years, teams drafting cornerbacks in the top 15, there are about as many misses as there are hits. My question, is there something that goes into selecting a cornerback that makes it difficult, I guess, as far as picking the right one?

MIKE MAYOCK: We could have this conversation for 20 minutes. But after quarterback you look at corners and say they have the toughest job on the field. They're running backwards against world-class sprinters and they have to find the ball in the air.

I think when you're looking at corners, you have to go to the basics. That's two things. Can you find a ball in the air with your back to the quarterback? Number two, are you willing to tackle? They're the two biggest reasons the big plays occur. Corners can't do those two things.

So there are a lot of pretty-looking guys that run fast forward in shorts. And I think we make mistakes sometimes when we fall in love with the guys with hips and great change of pace, and we forget that they either can't catch the ball or they won't tackle. So I think that's where most of the mistakes are made.

I think one of the things the Eagles have the advantage

of, their defensive coordinator is Jimmy Schwartz. And last year, even though they didn't really have any corners, they were No. 12 in the league in points allowed. I think their defensive back coaches do a really nice job with technique. But what I love is they demand that you tackle.

So I keep telling people, I think they should go offense at 14. I'm not sure there are any game changers there at 14. If Conley is there, you have to look at it. After that, I'd rather go in the second or third round and get Chidobe Awuzie, and I'd even go down to the fourth round and get Damontae Kazee. There are a bunch of guys out there that can do certain jobs. But I think you've got to continue to support Carson Wentz.

Q. Just wanted to know what you thought Tampa should do and can do at No. 19?

MIKE MAYOCK: Oh, you know, last year they went defense and placekicker on their first four picks. Two years prior to that, I think they went 12 out of 13 on offense.

The way I look at this thing, they've got to continue to upgrade their defensive back field. They drafted Hargreaves last year in the back field. But Brent Grimes is 34 years old. The safeties, they signed Wilcox, Ryan Smith was a fourth-rounder last year that we don't know much about yet.

Then you get into the whole running back situation, and whether or not Dalvin Cook, Christian McCaffrey, those kind of guys. And, by the way, I do believe those kind of guys make sense at 19. I think McCaffrey will be off the board. I think Cook's going to slide because of character concerns. Could Dalvin Cook be staring them in the face at 1? I think he could be, and I think he needs to be a consideration.

And I think they also have to continue to look for edge rushers when you consider Robert Ayers is what, 32? He kicks inside. I thought Noah Spence had a really good year. But they've got to continue to upgrade that group.

The way I look at this thing, at 19, does the tailback or running back make the most sense? Because they added DeSean Jackson, they've got Mike Evans, and they've got to take some pressure off Jameis Winston. He's got 24 turnovers last year, too many. They've got to help him with the run game. I think that's got to be their first priority.

Q. DeShone Kizer made some comments that seemed to make some national headlines yesterday. I'm wondering if GMs and decision-makers really pay attention to that kind of thing.

The second thing, you mentioned that he may go middle to late first to middle second. If you were a GM, would you take him in the first round?

MIKE MAYOCK: What were the comments he made yesterday? Is that where they asked him to comment about Brian Kelly's comments?

Q. No, no, it was about -- it had to do with imagine you could have the body of Cam Newton with the mind of Tom Brady, that thing.

MIKE MAYOCK: Oh (laughing). You know, when 21-year-old kids say things like that, and like Myles Garrett, whatever he said a little while ago, I just start to laugh. To me that's just immaturity. On a scale of that versus putting your hands on a woman or testing positive at the combine, I think it's minute, and I think most people just kind of laugh and say, well, the kid will grow up once he gets to camp and realizes that he's not the reincarnate of Cam Newton and Tom Brady. So I don't think that's a big deal.

You're asking me a direct question would I take him in the first round, and I'm in the back seat. I don't know what team I have or what my needs are. What I'm telling you, and I've been consistent about with people, is that I do believe he's got all the physical traits to be a first round quarterback and to be a starting quarterback. However, I don't think he's ready to play. And because he's not ready to play, I would be very hesitant to take him in the first round.

Would I like to develop him behind the starting quarterback for a year or two? I would love that. I would love to get him within a room with a mature quarterback, somebody who has been around and grind his tail off and shows this kid, who is a smart kid, hey, this is what it takes to play at the level.

People don't understand. Not just quarterbacks. A lot of kids, 21, 22-year-old impressionable kids get drafted by certain teams, and they go into their rooms, and I mean the position. That's where they spend their most time. The guys in the position group room. If you get in a good room, most of the kids will go towards the good. If you get in a bad room, a lot of kids will go towards the bad.

It takes a whole lot of mental toughness to be 21 and not go hang out with the older guys at night. It takes an awful lot.

So, bottom line for me is I look at him and say I'd love to develop him. But to me a first-round quarterback should be capable of starting year one, and I don't believe he can.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Tarell Basham of Ohio

University. What is your assessment of him, and what range of round might he go this week?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, he's really fun to watch. He's also 6'4", 269, long arms. He ran 4.7. If you watch his Tennessee game, he's got two sacks. Tremendous motor, really. I think he's a guy that has very quietly helped himself throughout the process. His tape looks good. He's from a mid-major. He gets to the Senior Bowl. He plays well, ran well at the combine, he's done everything right.

At this point -- and, remember, this is a very deep-edged class, at this point I have him at the top of the third round, but that doesn't mean he can't go mid to late second round. So he's really helped himself. And I think he's best for a base 4-3 team, but has shown just enough athleticism that he could probably stand up if he had to.

Q. UCF cornerback Shaquill Griffin came on kind of late in the NFL combine, had a good showing. How important is the interview process for a kid like him that's sort of looked at as a potential sleeper?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, you kind of break it up into different things. His game tape, number one. It's good game tape. He had 28 passes broken up in the last two years, six interceptions the last two years, and he's 6', 190-plus, and ran really fast. Ran a 4.39 and 4.4, so the tape was pretty solid. The combine was really good.

Now it's about trying to get the notes to Griffin. And that's an important part of this entire process. Obviously I'm not privy to being in those meetings, so I don't know how he did individually with people. I do know that a lot of defensive back coaches really like him. I think he's got a chance to go in the third round, but I don't think he gets out of the fourth round.

Q. There's been some talk of Christian McCaffrey potentially being better at the wide receiver position in the NFL than his current position. Do you buy into any of this?

MIKE MAYOCK: I think all it does is add to his versatility. I think it's great that people make those comments because I'll tell you at the combine what was interesting, when the running backs got done, their work, their position work, they sent everybody to the showers except three or four guys that they asked to run some slot routes. And he ran the slot routes maybe better than any slot wide receiver had run them at the combine this year. It blew people away. Then they sent the other guys in, and he stood out and returned punts. He looked like a natural punt returner.

So his label is running back, but the fact that he could line up in the slot or out wide or run routes from the

running back position, all that does is help him.

I don't think he's going to be a slot in the NFL. I believe he's got the talent to be a top 10 or top 15 pick in the NFL Draft. I'm going to label him a running back, and I think he can get 12 to 15 touches a game in the run game. I think he can catch the ball four or five, six times a game, and if you want, he can return punts. I think what people forget is in his last two years at Stanford, he averaged 30 touches a game. That's a heavy load. He's 202 pounds and he only missed one game.

So from my perspective, all that stuff about him as a slot receiver, all that does is enhance him.

Q. With the Vikings picking at 48, what position do you think will have the most to pick from at that selection?

MIKE MAYOCK: You're going to put me all the way down at 48. That's a lot of pressure. You know, Rick Spielman and Zimmer are always really interesting, and there is a lot of conversation about the running back position. Obviously they signed Latavius Murray. Without having a first round pick, how do you make a slash? How do you get a first round talent?

One of the things that you have to exhaust if you're the Vikings is whether or not to look at Joe Mixon. And I think Joe Mixon's going to go in the second round, and I'll preface this for people who go crazy and just say that if I'm the GM, I take him off my board. As soon as I see that video, he's off my board. However, more than half the league is doing their homework on this guy, and he's going to play in the league.

So if you're in Minnesota and you have a first round pick, you're doing your homework, in my opinion. So I don't have any idea what they are or aren't doing with Joe Mixon, but I would assume that's a guy they're looking at really hard, trying to evaluate him.

I also think they're trying to remake that whole offensive line. And obviously it's not a great offensive line year. However, I think at 48, you're sitting there in the middle of the second round. You've got to be looking at guys like Taylor Moton from Western Michigan, Dion Dawkins from Temple, Feeney from Indiana, Elflein from Ohio State. Those are the kind of players that I think would fit into that range.

And they've got to fix that offensive line. They've put a lot of work in it with Remmers and Riley, the two outside guys. But Dawkins, Moton can both kick inside the guard. Feeney and Elflein are inside players as well. So I think that helps them the most at offensive line.

Q. I wanted to ask you about FAU's defensive end, Trey Hendrickson. Assuming the Panthers take a running back in Round 1, would he be a player that could possibly look at later on maybe in the third round or so?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I'm a Trey Hendrickson fan. I've got him in my third round. His tape is good. His East-West game is outstanding. He's 6'4", 266, he's got short arms, which people are trying to kill him with. 32-inch arms. But surprisingly he ran 4.65 at the combine. Faster than people thought. His durability was outstanding. I think he played 48 consecutive games. Heavy production.

So my answer to you would be, A, his tape is good. He's a good football player. He's done everything right in the process. He's durable, and he fits the type of scheme that Carolina plays, so I would think absolutely he'd be in consideration in their third round.

Q. Nebraska, this isn't a good Nebraska draft class here, but is there anybody undervalued or a sleeper kind of guy you see? And the second part, maybe a big-picture thought at all on where Nebraska's at right now with that?

MIKE MAYOCK: To be honest with you, I'm not close enough to the program where I'm seeing it on a daily basis. Obviously, I'm only seeing it as I evaluate their prospects every year. You're right, I'm not seeing much from Nebraska this year. The only guy I spent a lot of time on is Nate Gerry. He was at the combine. He's a safety. Physical kid. Had some stuff off the field. He's going to be a day-three guy, that sixth round safety. A very deep safety class.

But outside of them, I haven't spent a whole lot of time on their players. Last year they had Maliek Collins, who I believe went in the third round. He was an explosive quick three technique that came out early.

But you would have to do your own study as far as how they're recruiting and developing those draft picks, because I'm in a little bit of a vacuum here.

Q. You talked about Christian McCaffrey's versatility on offense. I was wondering how you see Jabrill Peppers fitting in on someone's defense?

MIKE MAYOCK: He's another lightning rod conversation. I think the way you asked the question is a good one, and that is the coaches in the drafting department all have to be on the same page all the time. But especially with players like Peppers.

I think he's a first round talent, but you better figure out in advance how you're going to use him. I know day one he can be the best return specialist on your team,

and don't underrate that. That's point number one.

Point number two, you better have a plan for him on defense. And from my perspective, he's better closer to the line of scrimmage. There are certain players that just are. And I think he's a starting strong safety that's better in the box. I think he can play nickel, especially teams that have big nickel and little nickel. I think he'll be your big nickel all day long.

The concern is whether or not he can match-up and cover tight ends. Obviously he can from a speed perspective, but just from a size perspective, if you line him up on tight end. I know he can handle running back.

When you take him in the first round or any round, but I think he's a first round player, you have to have a plan. Are you playing him on offense at all, trying to get the ball in his hands? Just have a plan and develop this kid. He's just one of those lightning -- when he gets in a room, his energy is just contagious. So you're going to want him in your locker room. You're going to want him on the field. But you need to know what the plan is, and you need to follow through with that plan.

Q. With the 3-4 edge rushers available at 30 for Steelers, who do you see there for them? Do you think that's the way they'll go or another position?

MIKE MAYOCK: I think the 34 edge guy makes sense. Let's face it, Harrison is 39 at five and a half sacks, but how long can he continue? Bud Dupree developed. They gave up on Jarvis Jones. So it's a big need.

I still believe they've got to continue to develop their corner position, even though they drafted Artie Burns and signed Coty Sensabaugh. But I also think losing Timmons is bigger than people think.

But at No. 30, I think there will be enough edge rush talent there that they could have their choice. Understand between Derek Barnett, Takk McKinley and Charles Harris, at least one of them will slide down from the mid to late 20s or 30s. So you could have one of those three. And T.J. Watt could be on the board.

I think Jordan Willis from Kansas State is an intriguing conversation at 30. Really tested well. Good football player. And the wildcard in there would be Tim Williams from Alabama, who might be the best pass-rusher in this entire class but has slipped because of character. And he's really more of a pass-rush specialist as opposed to a third down, physical run setter.

So I would expect they'd have a choice from enough guys, whether it's a Takk McKinley or a T.J. Watt or Jordan Willis, that they're going to get a good football

player at that point.

Q. The Ravens have been linked to a couple of Michigan guys in the first round, and you have the connection to the Harbaughs there. What are some of the hallmarks you see in some of the better Michigan prospects coached by Jim Harbaugh, and what do you make of the advantage that Harbaugh has having his brother there in Michigan?

MIKE MAYOCK: Who do you want to talk about? Peppers, Taco Charlton? Who else? Wormley? Anybody? Anybody else?

Q. No, I think those are the big two.

MIKE MAYOCK: First, obviously, the connection between the Harbaugh brothers -- you could throw dad in there who lives on the same street as Jimmy does in Ann Arbor -- but that connection is all they do is talk ball, and obviously John's got an advantage with any Michigan player because Jim's going to give him everything, everything, including the warts. John's got a real advantage there.

So when you're talking about Jabrill Peppers and the Baltimore Ravens, I said to the last caller, you've got to kind of have a plan. Eric Weddle is 32 years old, and they just signed Tony Jefferson who is a young free agent coming away from Arizona. Depending on how you want to use Peppers, and, again, I think he's better in the box than he is deep.

So with Weddle aging, you've got to be looking at safety. I would think that Peppers would be one of those guys you look at. I think he makes sense. But, again, you need to have that plan.

As far as Taco Charlton, they need edge-rush help. I'm not sure he fits what they do as well, and I know it's too early for him in the first round. Could they look at him in the second round? Perhaps. But I see him more as a base 4-3 end, and that's not really what Baltimore does.

Q. I'm going to hit you with another Michigan one. How relevant is it that they could challenge this 14-player record of most guys drafted in one draft?

MIKE MAYOCK: Say that again, please?

Q. As far as I can find, the record for most players drafted, Ohio State had 14 in '04, looks like Michigan could challenge that record at least. Is that a relevant situation? I know it's like a day-three conversation for you.

MIKE MAYOCK: I mean, I think it's a fascinating conversation. Obviously it's a compliment to Michigan in how they've recruited and developed players, and it

will continue to help them recruit and develop further players.

It's hard to say, you know -- you start to put things in historical perspective, and I think from an NFL -- I guess what my point is, from a collegiate overview it's really cool. Especially that number. That means you've got guys in all levels of the draft, first round, late round, middle round. To me that's awesome, and that means you've recruited well from anywhere.

From the NFL perspective, Miami and Miami back in the day, Alabama more today, generating all the first and second round picks they do is more sexy, but I think the fact that you're churning out 13, 14 guys, and I don't know how many they're going to get drafted, but it's pretty awesome that it's offense, defense in all the positions.

Q. Is there a common thread when you look to the later-round tapes of some of those guys? Is it fundamentally sound? Is there athletic skill? Is it something you've seen between Michigan players that's unique?

MIKE MAYOCK: I wouldn't say unique. But I do know that every team I've ever watched coached by Jim Harbaugh plays their tails off. So the common denominator of Michigan State this year is that everybody plays their tail off or they don't get on the field, and that's obvious on tape.

You can see their defensive coordinator, Don Brown, I mean, I watched him when he was at Boston College. His guys play their butts off. They've got talent. And it's just fun tape to watch.

So when I put on a Michigan tape, I know I'm going to get a well-coached, hard-working group of kids that play their tails off.