

NFL Network Media

Conference

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Mike Mayock

ANDREW JOHNSON: Thank you for joining us on today's conference call with NFL Network analyst, Mike Mayock, previewing the upcoming 2018 NFL Draft. Before I turn it over to Mike opening remarks and questions, a few quick NFL Network programming notes around the draft.

NFL Network provides live coverage of the 2018 NFL Draft from Dallas, April 26 through the 28. First round coverage begins at 8:00 p.m. Eastern on Thursday, April 26. Coverage of rounds 2 and 3 begin at 7:00 p.m. Eastern time on Friday, April 27, followed by rounds 4 through 7 at 12:00 noon Eastern on Saturday, April 28.

On Thursday, April 26, for the first-round coverage, Mike is joined by Rich Eisen, Daniel Jeremiah, Stanford head coach David Shaw, Fox's Troy Aikman, NFL Network's Steve Mariucci, Steve Smith Sr., and Ian Rapoport.

This year Fox will air NFL Network's coverage of rounds 1, 2, and 3. NFL Network's coverage of the 2018 NFL Draft features draft war room cameras in 21 team facilities, including the Cleveland Browns with the No. 1 overall pick.

Finally, Mike will reveal his first and only mock draft of the year on Wednesday, April 25th, at 8:00 p.m. Eastern time on NFL Network.

And now I will turn it over to Mike for any opening remarks before we take questions. Mike?

MIKE MAYOCK: Hi, everybody. Here we go again. You know, from my perspective, this quarterback draft like every draft, drives the top end of this thing. I'm always amazed -- and maybe I shouldn't be, but last year, three of the top twelve picks were quarterbacks, and all three were trade-ups on draft night.

The year before, the Rams went all the way up to 1 to go get Goff. The Eagles went from 13 to 8 to 2 to go get Carson Wentz. It's a quarterback-driven league. I think it's going to be a crazy 8, 10, 12 picks, so many permutations of the quarterback conversation.

And just to kind of underscore the importance of a quote, franchise quarterback, think about these two



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numbers. When the Houston Texans had DeShaun Watson, they averaged 35 points a game. When they didn't, they averaged 13. When the San Francisco 49ers had Jimmy Garoppolo, they went 5-0 and averaged 29 points a game versus when they didn't have him, and they averaged 17 points a game.

So the, quote, franchise quarterback situation is riveting, especially when you kind of look at what -- Case Keenum goes to an NFC Championship game. Blake Bortles, although he was a top ten pick, was not considered a high-level franchise quarterback, he goes to the AFC Championship game, and Nick Foles wins a Super Bowl with the Eagles. Is that an aberration or a trend?

Those conversations, those quarterback conversations, I've had with most of the league over the last month, and trust me, it's really been fascinating. So having said that, let's open it up and have some fun.

Q. Mike, how's it going?

MIKE MAYOCK: Good.

Q. I actually wanted to ask you about two guys from the University of Pittsburgh in Quadree Henderson and Brian O'Neill. I was curious where you see them getting drafted, and what their roles could be in the NFL, you know, with Quadree as a return specialist, possibly a wide receiver, and Brian as like an athletic guy who moved inside. Thank you.

MIKE MAYOCK: Here's the deal with both those guys. Brian O'Neill is a really gifted athlete, who was a tight end and basketball player in high school. Long, great feet, athletic, but a little bit underpowered. And he's probably going to end up going in the second round, but it may take him a little while to get strong enough to really be a quality left tackle in the league. I don't think he's getting kicked inside. He's going to be a left tackle. The concern with him is will he be like a Jake Fisher or a Cedric Ogbuehi, meaning a gifted athlete but underpowered.

Quadree Henderson is a wide receiver/running back/kick returner whose value really lies in the kick return game. He had a much better 2016, got more touches. He's a space player from scrimmage, but really the value is in the return game. I see him somewhere late

third day, sixth or seventh round.

Q. Hi, Mike. Thanks for your time. I just -- this class of quarterbacks for the last year or two has been anticipated, it seems. Now this point, I guess, I was just trying to put it in context to other classes. It seems like there's a quantity of quarterbacks, but how does the quality compare to past years?

MIKE MAYOCK: It's really interesting because I think people were so anticipating this class that it surprises people when we start to kind of pick our way through them and really grind the tape.

To put it in perspective, the two easiest quarterback evaluations I've had in the last eight or ten years are Andrew Luck and Carson Wentz, and that's because everything checked off both on the film and all the intangibles. Those two guys walked and talked like Drew Brees, Peyton Manning, Tom Brady, Russell Wilson, et cetera. I don't see anybody in this class that I get the same gut feel for as those two.

Darnold is my number one guy because I think he can beat you from both inside the pocket and outside the pocket, but after him, I feel like you can kind of pick apart different characteristics of each player.

Real quickly, when I look at Allen from Wyoming, biggest upside in the Draft, really exciting player, obviously has to learn how to be a little bit more accurate, and he's got to throw with timing and anticipation. Josh Rosen, the most natural thrower in the Draft, but he reminds me of Sam Bradford, both because they throw the ball naturally, but also the question about durability. Rosen's been hurt in college. He has an inability to protect himself in the pocket. He's a tough kid, but he gets hurt a lot. I don't know if he can survive in the NFL pocket for prolonged periods of time.

Mayfield, it seems to me like some teams love him and some teams just kind of go that's not my cup of tea. The film's good, but at the end of the day, you've got to make a decision in your building about who you want being the face of your franchise. And he's really cut both ways for a lot of teams.

The guy I'm most excited about is Lamar Jackson. He's the most exciting athlete in the Draft. I think somebody in the first round is going to make a philosophical and schematic commitment to this kid and change what they do offensively. And it might not be this year where he makes a significant move, but I think long term, I can't wait to see what Lamar Jackson becomes.

So when you look at those five kids, history tells you we'll be lucky if we get two to three that become franchise quarterbacks.

Q. I wanted to ask you why you think there's so much interest in the Draft in general and mock drafts in particular.

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, if somebody told me 15 years ago I'd be making my living doing the NFL Draft, I would have laughed at them. I think there are two or three reasons. I think, number one, the college fans drive part of it because they want to see what happens to their favorite players, and they're a very loyal group.

Number two, the NFL fans obviously can't wait to see what's going to augment their existing NFL team. And, number three, I think that the advent of fantasy football several years ago just blows me away, the interest level. Everybody thinks they're a GM now, and they can't wait to build their team, and this is the beginning of their new team.

So I think, when you add all those things up, the Draft has become this huge event, and I think, because of that, the mock draft energy has picked up steam. I mean, I see guys doing seven-round mock drafts, which is mind-boggling. I see guys the day after this draft doing next year's first round. I couldn't even name you 32 players in next year's draft. I don't know how they do it.

Q. Mike, I'm just kind of curious what you feel is the number one or two areas where Mason Rudolph is lacking and why that's kind of keeping him out of that top tier and has him a little bit further down.

MIKE MAYOCK: Sure. I really like Mason Rudolph. If he becomes a quality starter in the NFL, I don't think it would surprise me. And I think we are sometimes guilty of only talking about the top tier guys at every position, to the exclusion of some really good football players.

The two things in my head with Mason Rudolph are, number one, for a 6'5", 240-pound guy, he's got fairly average arm talent. I don't want that to be overblown because arm talent is overblown. But he doesn't blow you away with an ability to drive an 18-yard far hash comeback.

Number two, and what I think is a little bit more important, in today's NFL, you've got to have some escapability, some ability to buy some extra time. I think he struggles with that a little bit. When he's got time with clear feet and clear vision, he can drive the ball, and I think he's the best deep ball touch and accuracy thrower in this draft.

So I'm very bullish on this kid. I like the kid himself. I think he's a smart kid. I think he's going to be a starting quarterback in this league, but those are the two things that I -- they're nitpicking, but those are the two things that I would qualify.

Q. Hi, Mike. Appreciate your time. I just wanted to ask you about the Oakland Raiders at No. 10. Kind of what you see as a best-case scenario for them. And also what you think the chances are of the possibility of them maybe trading later down in the round and what positions they could look at if that were to happen.

MIKE MAYOCK: I'll tell you what, it's been kind of fascinating watching Coach Gruden and Reggie and everybody working the free agent period. I think they were probably more active than anybody. What they're trying to do, I think, was sign a bunch of one-year contracts to fill a bunch of needs so that when the draft day came, they could deal from strength and pick the best player on their board.

They're sitting at 10, and I think if they went offense at 10 -- I look at how much money they have invested in their offensive line. I look at Donald Penn at age 35, and I think a guy like Mike McGlinchey, who's clearly the number one tackle in the Draft, would have to be of interest. I think on the defensive side, there's a bunch of playmakers that are considered top ten picks that could fit in with them. Chubb will be gone. I think the two insider linebackers, Roquan Smith is outstanding. I think Edmunds from Virginia Tech is outstanding. Both safeties, Fitzpatrick and James, are unbelievable.

If you wanted to look corner, it would be Denzel Ward. So I think the only offensive guy that would fit the profile would be McGlinchey, but I think they're going to have the choice of one of those defensive players, and they're all special. As far as trading back, I think that's just -- I think you're getting -- where they are in the top ten, I think they're getting a special player. Depending how far they want to -- how far they're willing to drop is really what it comes down to. What's the compensation and how far down will they be willing to go.

(Laughter)

Q. Why are you laughing? Stop laughing. It's not funny.

Hey, Mike, I'm looking at your six-man top five running back list here, and I noticed that Ronald Jones dropped to No. 5. We have him here in studio today on Total Access, and I'm wondering if you could explain to him what you're seeing that led you to make that decision and what he still

needs to work on.

MIKE MAYOCK: Really appreciate you putting me on the spot. Thanks, Lindsey. That's awesome.

Q. You're welcome.

MIKE MAYOCK: I've got Ronald Jones as a second round running back, and I think that's pretty special. I think his ability with the ball in his hands is as good as anybody in this draft. The concern I had is whether or not he has natural hands. And at 205 pounds, basically you're looking at a back that's not going to get 25 touches in the run game. I know what he can do with the ball in his hands. I know, when you hand it to him, he's fine. My concern is just third down, change of pace, throwing the ball, pass protection -- how elite will he be at that level?

But trust me, I love his football game. I just question the natural hands.

Q. Mike, with the Jets at No. 3, say Darnold and Allen are off the board -- I know there's a lot of permutations, but say those two guys are off the board. Do you go Rosen or Mayfield? What will you do? And what do you think Mike Maccagnan would do between Rosen and Mayfield?

MIKE MAYOCK: That's a mine field for me because, from my viewpoint, as I said earlier in my longer dissertation about the quarterbacks, a lot of being a GM is eliminating variables and trying to get people off of your board for different reasons. My two top quarterbacks are Darnold and Allen. If I'm the Jets, I'm struggling, telling you I would take Mayfield or Rosen, in all honesty. I don't have either of them rated that highly.

So I have a different answer for you than Mike Maccagnan will. I think Mike Maccagnan and the Jets need a quarterback that can step in and play fairly quickly, and I think Mayfield and Rosen are both able to do that. From a Jets perspective, will they embrace the swagger of Mayfield, which is pretty significant, and he might play really well and be successful, obviously, on Broadway. Rosen, again for me, it's more the durability issue than anything else.

So if Maccagnan stepped up at 3 and took Mayfield, it wouldn't surprise me at all.

Q. I know you said you don't know about the quarterbacks, but do you get any sense or have a feel for what the Browns and Giants are going to do at No. 1 and 2 less than a week away?

MIKE MAYOCK: If you're asking me for my gut feel, just based on all the film work I've done and talking to people around the league, et cetera, my gut tells me

that at 1, Cleveland will take Sam Darnold, and my gut tells me with the Giants, Gettleman likes to stay in his lane. You know he hasn't moved down before.

If he moves down -- by the way, I think the draft starts at No. 2 with the Giants and whatever they decide to do. So here's -- let me put it this way with Gettleman and the Giants: If they fall in love with the quarterback who they think is their franchise guy for the next ten years, that has to trump everything else regardless of fans that want Barkley or whatever, and you have to take your quarterback.

However, if you have any concern whatsoever, there are three great position players there, or you can trade down. And I think the furthest he would be willing to trade down would be 6, which is where Indy is, because if he went to 6, and quarterbacks now go 1, 2, and 3, he's still going to get Chubb, Barkley, or Nelson. So I don't think he's going past 6, and if he stays at 2, as much as he likes his hog molly, I still think that Barkley will be the guy.

Q. Mike, just wondering if you could give your evaluation on this defensive end class, and if the Saints can't really find an impact edge guy, would they be better off maybe building up the interior of that line?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yes. The edge thing is tough this year. Last year we set a record for edge guys drafted in the first three rounds. This year, the edge conversation is really kind of difficult. The question I think I have is, if they're sitting there at 27, if Harold Landry gets there, I think he's got to be in their conversation from Boston College. I don't really think he's going to get that far, and if he doesn't, then you're talking about a dropoff unless they want to take a projection with a Lorenzo Carter from Georgia, which is a little bit high for him.

If they don't go edge at that number, I'm not -- let me tell you something. I'm a little intrigued by the Patriots and the Saints with who their next quarterback's going to be. You know, in my head, guys like Belichick and Payton, who think outside the box and are very smart men, whether or not they'd be looking at Lamar Jackson and committing to that young man down the road. Again, I think New Orleans is a potential landing spot for him. But I think the priority would be to try to find the edge guy. If not edge, I think they're just -- the corner value, the linebacker value, they could go a couple different areas, including a matchup receiver.

Q. Mike, we know Saquon kind of headlines the running back class. I wonder if he could break down what you think of this year's running back crop. Particularly if the Giants, if they do pass on

Saquon, what they might be able to get at the bottom of the first, top of the second.

MIKE MAYOCK: Let me give you just a 20-second overview on what's happening in the league right now. I've had this conversation with a bunch of GMs and coaches, and here's the deal. Let's forget about labelling offensive players for a second, and understand that wide receivers since the 2014 class, the first round has fallen off the cliff. Amari Cooper has had some production, and that's about it. Players are saying forget what you call them -- excuse me. Coaches are saying forget what you call them, but they're not wide receivers, they're not running backs, tight ends. Find me a dynamic offensive player, and I'll figure out how to use them. And I think that's what we've seen at the running back position the last few years.

Whether it's Kamara, who's one type of back, or Kareem hunt, who's a different type of back, both of whom go in the third round and literally change the way their offenses are viewed a year ago.

So at the running back position this year, I think it's just as deep. Barkley's special. Derrius Guice, I think is a first round talent who's got to be a little bit more consistent and mature with the way he projects himself. I think Sony Michel is a first round talent. I think there's some concerns out there about his knee and whether or not that would push him in the second round. But I compare him a little bit to Alvin Kamara. I don't think he catches the ball as well but a similar run game.

And then you start getting into guys, again, at the top of the second, like you asked me, Sony Michel, Ronald Jones from USC is a change of pace guy. Penny from San Diego State, great kick returner and really a good tailback at 220 pounds. And Nick Chubb, the other Georgia cornerback, you could make a case for all four of those guys, top of the second round, all of whom I think are going to bring value to a team.

Q. For the Ravens at 16, do you think they'd be reaching if they took Calvin Ridley or D.J. Moore at that spot? Which would be a better fit at Baltimore?

MIKE MAYOCK: That's a good question. Ridley is an outside guy only, even though he runs great routes and his acceleration and burst is tremendous, at 188 pounds or whatever he is. I struggle with him inside. I think D.J. Moore has a little bit more versatility, plus he's a return guy.

So I kind of like D.J. Moore a little bit more than Ridley for Baltimore. You lost Campanaro, your punt returner. This kid might not give you as much early because he's a little bit raw, but he's built like a running back. When he gets the ball in his hands, he's special. I think it's a

little bit early for either of them at 16; they're more 20 to 30 type players, but I think Moore would be the better fit long term in Baltimore.

Q. Hi, Mike. There sure seems to be a lot of split opinions on Josh Allen. What attributes of his make NFL people believe he won't be the next cannon-armed bust like a Gabbert, Mallett, or Lynch?

MIKE MAYOCK: Interesting conversation. I wish we had an hour. Here's the deal. I'm with you on -- he's got the biggest arm I've seen since JaMarcus Russell, and JaMarcus Russell was a bust. What I think differentiates this kid is his football IQ, passion, work ethic, and I could see a difference between 2016 and 2017, and I could see a difference between 2017 to the Combine and then again to the Pro Day.

And I think with tall quarterbacks especially, footwork is critical, and most tall quarterbacks struggle early, accelerating everything. What he has to do is learn how to anticipate and throw with timing, even more than the whole accuracy conversation, because he's more accurate than people think. I could give you a bunch of examples on very difficult small window throws where this kid fits it in where five quarterbacks in the world wouldn't even try to make the throw.

He has to get his eyes and his feet connected, and he needs about a thousand reps, and he needs to sit in a room behind Eli Manning or Drew Brees or Tom Brady. He needs a year behind those guys learning how to be a professional, but I love his intangibles. The kid loves the game. He's willing to work. He's really athletic, which gives me hope for his footwork. I'm kind of buying into the kid, as is a lot of the league.

Q. With quarterbacks getting rid of the ball faster than ever, it seems like teams are valuing defensive backs much more than they used to. What's your take on that trend? And the second part of the question is are the colleges producing enough of these DBs to meet the demand?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah. It's a cat and mouse game back and forth. As the NFL is now kind of emulating college, as we're getting more and more of these spread type of players, spreading the field horizontally, ball comes out quickly.

I'll tell you one thing we are seeing is defensive backs, corners that can press are critical so you can disrupt routes immediately, so that you can't just let everybody throw bubble screen all day long. But on top of that, it reinforces the importance of an inferior pass rush. That's a trend. Five years ago, six years ago, defensive tackles that stopped the run were the priority. Now defensive tackles that can affect the quarterback

are the number one priority. So immediate pressure up the middle bothers quarterbacks more than anything else. If you can protect your quarterback from guard to guard, you can push those elite pass rushers past your quarterback and let him squat in there and have time to throw the ball. So being able to disrupt the quarterback inside-out has become a trend. That's a big deal.

Having corners that can press, safeties that occasionally can press, has become a big deal. And the other thing that's become a big deal, it's a matchup game, and who's matching up with the tight end that is now a big wide receiver. Do you have a D-back that can cover him man to man. Can you cover the running back out of the backfield? Who's your linebacker that's going to line up across from -- pick a name. The Saints rookie running back from last year.

So at the end of the day, it's a matchup league, interior pressure, and, yeah, the corner position, I think has been prioritized for years.

Q. Hi, Mike. I wanted to ask you about Arden Key. Just your assessment of his as a player, your sense of him off the field. Obviously, from a 49ers perspective, they're taking heat for still just having Ruben Foster on the roster. Is that, obviously, nowhere near the first round, but is that something they could even do maybe just from a PR perspective? I realize that's a bit subjective. But those are my questions. Thank you.

MIKE MAYOCK: There are a significant number of players with character and medical concerns every year. Arden Key is one of the main guys on the character side. I would tell you from an athletic perspective, if he was clean off the field, he'd be a first round edge rusher. As it is now if he went in the third round, I wouldn't be surprised. If he went in the fourth or fifth round, that's probably what it would be. I think what it is is mitigating risk, both financially and with your owner and your fan base. You take a guy in the first three rounds, it's a significant commitment, and this kid has had a lot of issues.

So at the end of the day, you've got to provide an environment and infrastructure to try and get him in daily, day by day, over the next four or five years, and that's asking a lot.

Q. I had a specific hypothetical for you for the Dolphins at 11. If you say that the top four quarterbacks are off the board and you also say Denzel Ward and Minkah Fitzpatrick are off the board, and you're Miami looking at Roquan Smith, Tremaine Edmunds, Derwin James, Vita Vea, where would you lean if you're Miami?

MIKE MAYOCK: Give it to me again. The two inside linebackers?

Q. Roquan Smith and Tremaine Edmunds still on the board as well as Derwin James on the board and Vita Ve.

MIKE MAYOCK: That's pretty good pickins right there. Here's how I look at this thing. With Vita Ve, as much as I love him, I'd like him to lose 15 pounds and stay there, and you're going to have to manage that for the next five years. And really the key to his value is how many snaps are you getting from him in a subpackage? And if you believe you're getting significant pass pressure out of him, then yeah, he'd be worth the 11th pick in the Draft.

However, there's two question marks with him that would discount him for me. I'd be looking -- between those two inside linebackers and Derwin James, I think Roquan Smith and Derwin James are the safest. I think those two kids are special. I think they're home runs. I think they're plug and play day one, and they solve multiple issues for you on defense. The only down side to Edmunds, he's 19 years old. He doesn't even turn 20 until the week after the draft. I think his upside is higher than those other kids, but I think his floor is lower. I'm not sure what you're getting with him at the end of the day.

So I would say either Smith or James, and you'd sprint that up to the podium and be really happy with either.

Q. I was just wondering what your evaluation is of Tyrell Crosby and Will Hernandez?

MIKE MAYOCK: Sure. Two really good football players. Crosby, I see as predominantly a right tackle only. Really like his take. He's got a little edge to him. Dropped some weight, got in better shape as the process went on, and tested fairly athletically. I've got him in mid to late second round, and I think he's a starting right tackle.

Will Hernandez is a great conversation, and teams are a little bit all over the board. He was 340 at the senior bowl, 327 at the Combine. Which guy are you getting? Either way, he performed outstanding. But really, I think the gap scheme, offensive schemes like him more than the zone scheme does, and that makes sense. He's a tough guy, better feet than you think. If he goes -- I think he's going to go somewhere between 24 and 40. So he could slide into the first round, and he's a nasty, tough guy. I like both those kids a lot.

Q. Kind of wanted to have you go back in time a little bit. You were still covering the draft when Marty had his first stint as GM, kind of what you saw from him during those years. I know he had a

lot of big hits in the first round with Cam and Kuechly and Peppers. And some of the subsequent rounds, maybe the second round, not so much. Just kind of what you think we can learn from his history as he moves forward here next week.

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I think it's an interesting question, and I don't have his draft picks in front of me, obviously. You're right, he hit on a lot of those first rounders. Being a BC guy, my favorite was Kuechly at 8 or 9, surprising he took a linebacker that high. And it showed me he wasn't afraid of somebody who could be great, and if Kuechly stays healthy, he's a Hall of Famer.

So I think they stay in their lane a bit and prioritize, without too much movement up or down the board, what they feel like is their priority. And if you're sitting there where they are at 24, and I think they've got two third round picks also, I think you're going to see him take a safety somewhere in there, maybe a higher level safety, maybe Michael Adams at 37. At some point corner and wide receiver, maybe a speed wideout.

They've got to handle the tight end situation. Who knows how long they will or won't have Olson. But I think what you're really going to see is a consistent philosophy, whether it was Hurney or Gettleman of staying in the lane, trust your prospects, trust your scouts, and don't move too much up or down the board.

Q. Marcus Davenport, you hear a lot of comparisons to Ziggy Ansah with him. I was curious of your analysis of his game. Detroit wants to be multiple here with Matt Patricia. Does that skill set he has kind of fit what they want to do here?

MIKE MAYOCK: I'm a Marcus Davenport guy. I really like him. I think the underlying understanding here has to be that he's very raw and is going to take a little bit of time. So even in a simple system where you line him up wide and teach him how to rush the quarterback, he's got a lot to learn. The further you get away from that -- and by the way, he's a very smart kid. I'm not taking any shots at him at all. I'm just saying he's as raw as can be. The further you get away from a simple system, where you're asking him to do multiple jobs -- whether it's rush and then the next snap you're dropping and you've got speed gap -- the more you're asking him to do, the longer it's going to take him to develop.

So in a Matt Patricia system, which is very complicated, I think it's going to take him a long time. So to answer your question in a vacuum, he's better off in a simple system where he can just line up and go as

opposed to being asked to do multiple tasks.

Q. Mike, I'm sure after doing this for a long time, you kind of develop an idea of what certain GMs like. Now that Reggie McKenzie has Jon Gruden in the mix, and presumably since, by virtue of his contract, Jon will pick the roster, how do you see this Raiders dynamic in terms of the draft? What do you think they'll be looking for? How will it change with Jon added?

MIKE MAYOCK: It's interesting, whenever you get a coach that's kind of sitting in the number one seat -- and I think what you saw, Jerry, over the last six weeks is how quickly and aggressively they went out and signed free agents. And it wasn't the big name free agents or the high-priced ones, it was free agents in the B and C lane that could fit immediate needs. And I think that was really smart because it allows you on draft day to just go get really good football players.

Do they have holes? Of course they've got a bunch of holes. But I think I said earlier on the call, the way I look at Oakland early in the Draft is at 10, if four quarterbacks go in front of them, they're sitting in a pretty good place. And the only offensive player I would have ranked anywhere near that high would be Mike McGlinchey, the tackle, who I think fits a need for Oakland because Donald Penn is going to be 35 years old, and you've got a lot of money invested in that offensive line. McGlinchey would be a natural.

However, there's going to be five or six defensive players available there that are big time, game-changing defensive players. So I don't care whether you're talking about one of the two safeties, Denzel Ward, one of the two inside linebackers, Vita Vea. One or two or three of those guys is going to be there for them, and I think they can take that in any direction. And I think Jon's a very aggressive guy, and he wants to get this thing fixed quickly in his mind. They're 10, 41, and 75. Whatever they do at 10 will trigger the direction they head in the next two rounds.

Q. Mike, wanted to talk about two Auburn guys, Kerryon Johnson and where he fits in the running back class, and Jeff Holland, and where he fits in the edge class.

MIKE MAYOCK: Sure. Kerryon Johnson is a good football player. There's an average of seven running backs that go in the first three rounds, and I've got him at my one, two, three, four, five -- seventh running back. So technically, he's in my third-round stack. I think he could go in the second or third round. He's kind of a leggy, jump cut guy, good athlete, finishes runs, but I see him somewhere late two to mid three.

The other kid is an interesting player because he's a

combination -- at Auburn he was an edge rusher. In the NFL, he might have to stand up. There are more of those type of players in this draft than I've ever seen primarily because the college game is getting smaller and quicker to deal with the spread offenses. We're getting all these undersized edge guys we have to figure out what to do. Jeff Holland is one of them. So even though he showed he could rush the quarterback, he's going to have to be an off the ball linebacker that in a subpackage may be able to be a joker. In other words, moved around a little bit and provide extra value. I've got him in my -- let's see. Where did I put him? In my fourth-round stack, end of four to the beginning of the fifth. I think special teams are going to be important for him early.

Q. Who's the one player this season who's been hardest to place in your mock draft?

MIKE MAYOCK: I haven't even done my mock draft yet, but I'll tell you the one that I've thought the most about is Lamar Jackson. The reason it's so hard to place him is because his upside is so high I wonder if somebody is going to try to get him in the first 10 or 12, 13, 14 picks just because he could be so special.

The flip side to that is, if he starts sliding into the 20s, you've got all these really good football teams with what I call a secondary quarterback need. They've got their primary guy, but you look at -- you start at 17 with San Diego and Philip Rivers, New England with Tom Brady -- I said San Diego. I apologize. The Chargers. New Orleans with Drew Brees is 39 or whatever he is, Pittsburgh with Ben Roethlisberger. So there's a whole group with secondary needs that would be a good place for him to go to sit behind one of those quarterbacks to learn how to be a pro.

So he's the most intriguing and hardest to place. I hope that answers your question.

Q. Mike, you said earlier that your gut tells you at 1 the Browns will take Sam Darnold. I was hoping you could expound on that a little bit. If you think that maybe the debate there is really down to Darnold and Josh Allen, that's kind of been the national buzz for a while, could you maybe analyze that debate.

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, sure. Look, I've been saying that since the Combine, Darnold and Allen. It comes off watching a whole bunch of tape and having a little bit of feel for what I call northern weather and having the ability to throw the ball -- when you talk weather, people worry about rain and snow, and I'm saying no, I'm talking about wind, being able to step in the pocket and throw the ball in heavy wind in December.

Immediately, Darnold and Allen are the two guys I think

of from that perspective. If you look at John Dorsey's history, you know what he did a year ago. He took the biggest armed quarterback in the Draft and traded up from 27 to 10 to get him in Kansas City.

I really believe -- and this is Mike Mayock talking, not John Dorsey. I have no inside knowledge. My gut tells me that, if you're choosing between the two, Allen might have the higher ceiling, but you've swung and missed so many times in Cleveland at quarterback, can you afford another one with your first pick? Your first pick has got to set the tone, and I think at the end of the day it will be Sam Darnold, and he's got a little Brett Favre in him, which I think John likes. John likes a little swagger. He'll make some mistakes and turn the ball over, but at the end of the day, that's what my gut tells me.

Q. I wanted to ask you about one more Auburn player, Braden Smith, where you think he kind of fits in class. Do you think he's a guy that could compete to be a starter right away in the NFL, depending on where he lands?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I like Braden Smith. He's a big, powerful dude, played a couple of different positions. I've got him at the bottom of my -- in my second-round stack. I think worst case for Braden, you're looking at the top of the third round, and I do believe he can step in at day one and compete. A lot of these offensive linemen, you've got to wait for them to get enough strength to play in the NFL. This guy's ready to go right now from a strength perspective. Somewhere late second, early third, and compete day one as a starter.

Q. You mentioned earlier how the Raiders can draft a multitude of players at the No. 10 spot. What positions do you see them addressing later in the Draft in days two and three?

MIKE MAYOCK: That's a hard one. I'll tell you somebody who will have some influence in that, though, is the Raiders special teams coach Rich Basaccia, who goes back with Jon to winning a Super Bowl in Tampa Bay, and when you get into that third day, I think the smart head coaches and general managers lean on their special teams coach a little bit.

I'll give you an example of a guy. LSU's got a wide receiver named Russell Gage, who pretty much nobody has ever heard of, yet when I went to their Pro Day about three weeks ago, I had three different special teams coaches call me before I got to Baton Rouge and said you better check out this Russell Gage, who I knew little to nothing about. I went up and introduced myself to the kid, watched him run, watched him run routes, and I even interviewed him on television because I liked him so much. My point is he's probably going to be a sixth-round wide receiver. I

guarantee you Rich Basaccia and every other special teams coach in the league is banging the table for this kid going, give him to me. He's going to be a core cover guy in special teams.

And the great thing as a wide receiver is he's going to be active 16 Sundays every year because of the special teams, and that will give him a chance to develop.

So it's hard to give you exact names and positions they're going to target. It depends what they hit in the first two rounds, but at the end of the day, expect Basaccia and the special teams guys to play a big role in it.

Q. I had a question about the Big 12. It's kind of lagging the last couple years in Power Five schools in terms of producing NFL Draft picks. I wonder if you had any narratives on that topic or what you've noticed during the last couple years during your evaluations.

MIKE MAYOCK: You're not going to like this, and Big 12 coaches aren't going to like me. I'm just going to say what the -- I've had a lot of conversations around the league, and sometimes Big 12 football is really hard to watch, especially from a defensive perspective. On the one hand, I give them a ton of credit for being creative offensively. They throw the ball -- I mean, just to give you an example, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State is 38-38 at halftime. It's fun television. It's exciting football. But 38-38 at halftime?

And then I give University of Texas some credit because Texas played against Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, and USC, three of the top quarterbacks in the country, and Texas held those three quarterbacks and those offenses to their least output of the year. Texas plays a different scheme. Defense is single high, two high, a bunch of really sophisticated subpackages like an NFL team would. All three teams struggled. And here's Oklahoma State, who put up 38 in a half against Oklahoma, scored 10 in regulation against Texas because Texas played a different way than most Big 12 teams play and because Texas has athletes to execute the scheme.

That's a long way of saying that a lot of us get tired of watching these wide receivers run down the field unimpeded against safeties that are playing quarter coverage and beat by five yards. It's hard to evaluate those guys. And in turn, when it's hard to evaluate them, then sometimes they get knocked down further than they should. It's just -- and, again, the last thing I want to say is that a college coach's job is to win football games. It's not to develop football players. It's to win football games. I'm not taking a shot at their

style of football. I'm just saying it's a different evaluation for the NFL people.

Q. In your experience, are there some organizations that are hesitant to use a first round pick on a non-Power Five conference guys? Especially on defense.

MIKE MAYOCK: Can you back up? I didn't get any of the beginning of that.

Q. I said, in your experience, are there some organizations that are hesitant to use a first round pick on a non-Power Five conference player, especially on defense? And will being in a non-Power Five conference hurt Vander Esch at all, or how do you evaluate a guy like that?

MIKE MAYOCK: I'm not sure whether it's your phone or mine. I have no idea what you're saying. I apologize.

Q. Sorry about that. I said, in your experience, are there some organizations that are hesitant to use a first round pick on a non-Power Five conference player, especially on defense? And to play off that, will playing in a non-Power Five conference hurt Vander Esch at all? And how do you evaluate those guys?

MIKE MAYOCK: Here's the deal. The non-Power Five guys have opportunities to equal the playing field in the all-star games. That's for the seniors obviously. So if you go to the Senior Bowl, the East-West game or something, you get an opportunity to stand in the huddle with the guys from Alabama and Stanford, wherever. That's a great opportunity for certain players. For the most part, teams want to see players compete against quality on film. And you're right. If a kid is an underclassman from a non-Power Five, it's a little harder to convince yourself that, at the end of the day, he's going to be one of your guys.

Now, Vander Esch has a different conversation. A lot of people really like Vander Esch as a potential top 20 player. One of his issues is going to be medical. He wears that neck brace for a reason. He's got a cervical issue, and teams around the league right now are having the conversation about how bad or good is it really and at what level should we draft him? But I don't think Vander Esch has any issues regarding level of competition and how good a player he is.

Q. Interior rusher for the Raiders is something they're looking to address. Do you think sometime early in the draft, be it day one or perhaps even day two if they don't go through at pick No. 10? Who do you see as options --

MIKE MAYOCK: Which position?

Q. Interior rusher.

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, you know, again, I've heard a lot of Vita Vea to Oakland. People want to place him there. And the way I look at the Raiders, again, is at 10, they can get a significant player at 10, and it doesn't have to be an interior sub rusher or an interior rusher. They signed Tank Carradine, who's going to be on outside guy, or Armani Bryant, who can be an inside-outside guy. I think they've got to get Vanderdoes going a little bit, but there's no doubt that, again, I think they can take a safety, they can take a corner. If you want to get a sub rusher, it doesn't have to be in the first round. They've got 41 and 75. You can drop down a little bit. There are some people I think Justin Jones from North Carolina State could be at 75 or even in the fourth round, a difference maker. A guy like Nate Shepherd, Fort Hays State, in the third round. It's not a great interior defensive line class, but there are some different guys throughout it, PJ Hall, people call him a nose tackle. You can get him in the fourth round. He ran 4.75 at 310 pounds from Sam Houston State.

I think there's going to be some better value for them at 10, and I love Vita Vea, but I'm just not sure what he gives you as a rusher in your sub package, which you're in 60 to 70 percent of the time.

Q. I'm just doing something on the USC quarterbacks over the years coming out. Obviously there's been some highly touted guys that have not panned out and made the transition to the NFL. I just wonder if you have any kind of a common denominator theory on that, and do you feel like Sam will have that hanging over him until he proves himself in the league?

MIKE MAYOCK: I'm a big believer that you can't really knock the individual kid for failures of other players in his program. Sam Darnold is a completely different kid than -- name the last three or four USC quarterbacks. I don't care if you talk about Leinart, Sanchez, whatever, they're all different. They all have to be evaluated. They all have different coaches that are asking them to do different things. I don't think the league holds any of that over him. Having met him a little bit at his pro day, knowing some people that are working with him, I'm highly impressed by his football IQ. We interviewed him the day after his pro day, after he threw in the rain, and I got a kick out of him because he had a lot of humility, but it was tinged with a little bit of competitiveness and swag, and I like that, especially with a quarterback.

So yeah, I'm bullish on Darnold, and I don't think -- you can go back to Carson Palmer, who had a pretty good NFL career. So I don't think the recent failures of USC quarterbacks will hurt him at all.

Q. Jon Robinson obviously is in a different spot this year, picking at 25 compared to the top 10 the first couple years. What's the pool of players going to look like at 25, and is there a guy you think would be a good fit for Tennessee?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, Tennessee has got an interesting conversation because obviously you've got Orakpo and Morgan in their contract years, getting up in age. Dodd hasn't gotten it done as a second-round pick. At linebacker, Woodyard is 32 years old. They signed Compton. They invested at wide receiver for sure. But where I look at 25, could there be a good off-the-ball linebacker there that makes a difference, because if Harold Landry is there, that's a great opportunity. I think he fits what they do, and I think he'd be a really good fit for Tennessee at 25.

Off-the-ball linebacker, we get into that conversation of Vander Esch and his medical. If Rashaan Evans was there from Alabama, I would jump all over that. But if Evans is gone and Vander Esch is not necessarily on your board medically at that point, then I think you're looking at Harold Landry, and then if not, if Landry is gone, there's a whole different conversation going on. They've got a tremendous offensive line. Delanie Walker is 33, 34 years old. They're stocked at corner. I think at that point, you're just looking for the best player you can find, and at 25, you know, would they -- I really have them penciled in for an edge guy or an off-the-ball linebacker. I'm not sure where they would go at that point.

Harrison at safety, from Alabama, might make some sense, also.

Q. You talked briefly earlier about Nathan Shepherd, and I wonder if I could get your thoughts and evaluation on him, please.

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I like him, man. He's a Canadian kid at Simon Fraser, then he goes to a small Division II school. Even though he only played a day and a half or so at the Senior Bowl, I think it really helped him. He is a big dude with an NFL body. He's got kind of rare movement skills. I think the 3-4 teams would look at him and say, wow, he could be a 5 technique, which is a defensive end in 3-4, but he also might have the movement skill down the road to develop into a sub rusher inside.

He's kind of a rare guy from a height, weight, speed perspective. Raw as could be. I think he's worse-case a second talent, but he might drop into the third round, just because it might take a little while to get something out of him because he's so raw. But I'm telling you, I think the league is really intrigued by him and think he's got a lot of upside.

Q. Are David Onyemata and Akiem Hicks favorable comparisons to him coming in?

MIKE MAYOCK: You're really going Canadian, aren't you?

Q. Yes.

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, I think Hicks went, what, I think in the third year. Onyemata was fourth or fifth if I remember correctly.

Q. Something like that.

MIKE MAYOCK: But I think Hicks is the better comparison because I think Hicks is a thickly-muscled big kid that had some explosion, a little bit more quickness and explosion than Onyemata, and I think Shepard has some of that, also.

Q. I just wanted to get two things. One, your scouting report on Derrius Guice, what sort of pro you think he'll be, and then two, just the depth of running backs in this draft. How early is too early to take a guy like that? Obviously Saquon is going in the top, but if you're the Lions or a team like that, is there for value to waiting to take a running back than taking one in the first round?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, Derrius Guice, first-round talent. I don't think anybody questions his running style, which is north-south, tough, quick feet, ran better than people thought. He's a first-round talent. Reminds me a little bit, just style-wise, of a Frank Gore. Gets a lot of carries, tough. His issues more are just -- I don't know what the right word is. Maybe it's some immaturity off the field. What's his work ethic going to be like? Will he be a true pro? Will he show up to go to work every day? Some of those concerns could push him into the second round, but make no mistake about it, he's a talented kid.

When you start looking at the Lions, you know, I think you're on the right path as far as what's the style of running back. They signed LeGarrette blunt, obviously, but that's a one-year deal. So I think it's the bigger, stronger back that they need that they can then pair with Abdullah or Riddick or whatever they're going to have back there with him, and I think in that bigger, stronger thing, I love Nick Chubb. I think you don't have any baggage like Guice has. He's completely over the knee injury from two years before. He's strong, he's tough. If you could get him in the second or third round, I think that would be a home run.

Q. When talking about Marcus Davenport earlier, you thought he might be a bad fit for Detroit because of how long it might take him to develop. Who are some of the early-round guys, interior or on the edge, who you think might be a better out-of-the-box fit for a complex, multiple front that

Detroit is going to run?

MIKE MAYOCK: Yeah, and again, I think Davenport could play for them. I'm just questioning how quickly he could make an impact, that's all.

As far as edge guys, Landry, I think Rasheem Green from USC is an interesting player, bigger-bodied guy that can provide interior sub, flexibility. Same with Tyquan Lewis and Jalyn Holmes. I'm talking these guys are more down like in the third and fourth round, and then as far as inside players, at the high level, Vita Vea and Da'Ron Payne I think will be difference makers, and then as you start to work your way into the second or third round, I think Nate Shepard is a really interesting guy. I think down the line, Justin Jones, North Carolina State, is an interesting guy. Those are several names of bigger-bodied type guys that I think would fit in Detroit.

Q. I guess it was a couple months ago now you got a question about Patriots maybe drafting a quarterback there in the second or third round. I'm curious if those guys that you mentioned, Mason Rudolph, Kyle Lauletta, Luke Faulk, which of those guys do you think the Patriots might likely go after, and which of those guys do you think is going to have the brightest NFL career?

MIKE MAYOCK: I think the Patriots are as comprehensive as any team I've ever been around. The homework they do is amazing. So I think they throw a wide net, and they look at a lot of people, and they've got two first-round picks. They've got a lot of picks this year.

I think the first guy they've got to evaluate is Lamar Jackson, does he or does he not fit for what they could do down the road. Belichick is an outside-the-box guy, and I think that's the first thing you've got to think of is it's a contrarian move, but can you go from Tom Brady to Lamar Jackson, just like I asked earlier, can you go from Drew Brees to Lamar Jackson. Then you go to the more conventional style quarterbacks, Mason Rudolph, Kyle Lauletta, Luke Faulk. The more tape I watch of Lauletta, the more I like the kid. I spent about three hours watching him last weekend. He's 6'2½", 222, has enough arm, he's got some mobility, he's got a little moxie to him. I'm starting to think out of that next group, either Mason Rudolph or Kyle Lauletta are the two guys I like the most.