

The Roundtable: With the 3rd Pick, the Cleveland Browns ...

Written by {ga=consigliere}

Saturday, March 17 2007 7:00 PM -

All of the sudden, the NFL Draft is just six weeks away. And the rumor mill continues to crank. The most recent buzz has the Browns hell-bent on doing whatever it takes to obtain one of the draft's elite quarterbacks - LSU's JaMarcus Russell or Notre Dame's Brady Quinn. Is it just a smoke screen? Today, our panel of writers gives us their thoughts on what will happen when the Browns go on the clock in late April, and the responses are all over the board.



“The Roundtable” is a regular weekly Sunday feature that will continue throughout the year covering hot topics surrounding the Browns, Buckeyes, Cavaliers, and Indians. One question. Several different answers from TheClevelandFan.com panel.

The NFL Draft is still a little under six weeks away. But, that has not stopped the rumor mill from cranking up on what the Cleveland Browns will do with their first round pick, #3 overall.

Lots and lots of rumors that the Browns are seriously considering doing anything possible to get one of the two franchise quarterbacks available in this draft, JaMarcus Russell and Brady Quinn. Is this just a smokescreen? Or, are the Browns truly hell-bent on getting one of these two quarterbacks, namely Russell? Has what the Browns done in free agency changed their thinking on what they will do with the first pick? Could they take running back Adrian Peterson or offensive tackle Joe Thomas instead?

Given an open-ended statement, TheClevelandFan.com panel finished the following sentence: With the 3rd pick in the NFL Draft, the Cleveland Browns....

Mitch Cyrus: ... select Brady Quinn, QB Notre Dame. I know everyone is looking at Peterson, but I think the injury bug will scare Phil off from him. The scenario here is quite familiar; two quarterbacks, one rising in the eyes of scouts due to his incredible upside and physical abilities, the other sliding due to perceived problems “winning the big one”. Luckily, the Colts ignored the howls of the Mel Kipers of the world and selected Peyton Manning, the smart one who couldn’t win big games, over the physically “limitless” Ryan Leaf.

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Of course Jamal Lewis isn't the long term answer at running back, but I think there is a lot more upside to getting the franchise QB now, and then trying to pick up the franchise RB next year in what will be a deep RB draft. So go with Quinn, because Charlie Frye is not the answer...not with his deer-in-the-headlights looks and actions in the fourth quarter of games. Quinn is extremely smart, physically on par or better than recent first rounders Matt Leinart and Carson Palmer, and ready to step in early due to Charlie Weiss' tutelage.

If Detroit grabs Quinn first, I would expect Phil to quickly snatch up Joe Thomas.

Gary Benz: ...select Adrian Petersen.

If GM Phil Savage was going to pick a quarterback, it would be JaMarcus Russell but that will be scuttled most likely within a few minutes into the draft when Oakland makes its pick. There are a number of articles out there about what Detroit will do but none of it is likely to impact Savage's plan. For example, some are now saying that Lions GM Matt Millen is looking at Brady Quinn. Others have him taking Calvin Johnson. Others still have him taking Joe Thomas. Given Millen's history, it will probably be Johnson but it will matter little to Savage. I think he has his mind set on Petersen and the off-season moves to date point to that conclusion. Reuben Droughns is gone and Jamal Lewis is on a one-year deal. Behind Lewis are role players, at best. The Browns have a huge need at running back and Petersen, despite his injury history, is one of the best prospects in years.

Personally, I'd like to see the Browns take Joe Thomas. I know many claim he's good but not worthy of the third pick of the draft. But if Thomas falls, for example, to the 8th pick and ultimately becomes a pro bowler in his second or third year, what good was it to say he wasn't worth the third pick? The Browns need to finish building that line for the long term and, only then, should they concentrate on the skill positions. Thomas isn't a sexy pick by any means but he's really what they need. But assuming Savage doesn't go in that direction, I think the selection of Petersen over Quinn makes sense. Petersen will be able to accomplish more with an average line than will Quinn. Moreover, with an improved running attack, either Charlie Frye or Derek Andersen should have sufficient time to throw once in awhile.

John Hnat: ...will make me yawn.

It's the same situation every year. Every year, the NFL Annual Selection Meeting features one or more saviors -- guys who "will redefine the position" or "are shoo-ins for the Pro Bowl for the next ten years" or "are once in a generation talents". And every year, many (dare I say most?) of those young men fall well short of expectations, be it because of injury, circumstances, general suckitude, and/or having a giant pile of rocks where most people have brains.

Is Calvin Johnson a can't-miss wide receiver? Maybe ... but that's what they also said about Peter Warrick, David Terrell, Charles Rogers, and Braylon Edwards. Is JaMarcus Russell going to change the way we look at quarterbacks? Perhaps ... then again, Michael Vick was supposed to do that too. Does Adrian Peterson draw comparisons to Hall of Famers? Yes ...

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and so did Ki-Jana Carter, Curtis Enis, and Lawrence Phillips. Is Joe Thomas the prototypical left tackle? Sounds good to me ... then again, I thought the same thing about Robert Gallery and Tony Mandarich.

Sorry, but I've just about used up my lifetime allotment of Giving A Shit about the draft, particularly at the top. With the astronomical bonuses and salaries paid to the top players, the risk/reward ratio is skewed well against any top pick. And after a string of Couches and Courtney Browns and Super-Size Warrens and Edwardses, I'm past the point of getting excited about yet another high draft pick.

(Seeing as though the previous paragraphs were kind of a cop-out, here's my answer: the Browns will move heaven and earth to land one of the two premier quarterbacks, with Russell the likely target. Having addressed both lines and the RB position in free agency, QB is the only position of need that has a spongeworthy draft candidate available.)

Rich Swerbinsky: ...will either select JaMarcus Russell or Brady Quinn, or trade up to do so.

With Charlie Frye exposed last season, the Browns still need to acquire their quarterback of the future, and there are two franchise quarterbacks in this draft. They may have to move up a spot or two to do it, but I do believe that either Russell or Quinn will be the selection when the Browns make their high first round selection in this year's draft.

Realistically speaking, the Browns are still a year away from legitimate contention, and adding the quarterback this year gives you a year to season and ready Russell or Quinn for next year. I feel that both players will become big time QB's at the next level, and have a hunch Phil Savage agrees with me.

Erik Cassano: ...select Joe Thomas, I hope.

Thomas might not be a cure-all, but after years and years of watching the offensive line fail this team and short-circuit the running and passing games, I just think nothing is going to change, and it isn't really going to matter who is throwing, running and catching the ball, until the line gives plays time to develop.

Of course, there is a significant chance Thomas won't be there, so the Browns need a backup plan. If neither Thomas nor JaMarcus Russell (the only QB in this draft who I think has superstar potential) is there, I think the Browns would be best served by waiting until the last possible minute, hope some team gets desperate for Calvin Johnson or Brady Quinn, and offers the Browns a package of '07 and '08 picks to move up.

If that doesn't work, then I guess I'll be OK with taking Adrian Peterson, but I'm not so convinced he isn't going to be another injury-plagued Browns draft pick.

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I want no part of Quinn (overrated and doesn't show up in big games) or Johnson (the Browns don't need to spend another top-six pick on a receiver).

So I guess, in a nutshell, my first-round priority list looks like this:

1. Joe Thomas
2. JaMarcus Russell
3. Trade the pick
4. Adrian Peterson
5. Get very upset because they took Quinn or Johnson.

Mike Furlan: ...will hopefully not pick another guy who catches balls! Don't get me wrong, I like Calvin Johnson, I think he is the best player in the draft, but one more receiver in the first round and the Browns would officially become the Detroit Lions. It would actually be kind of cool if they did because I think Phil Savage would actually receive a commemorative Matt Millen plate from the Franklin Mint, but I have no idea who would be throwing him the ball.

I really have no idea who the Browns will draft. Savage has done a great deal to shore up the holes in their roster in free agency and I really like all of the signings. Now that being said, I do have a couple of guys that I would like the Browns to pass on.

Don't draft Adrian Peterson! We will regret it. He has the wiggle and speed to succeed, but unfortunately he is a tall, upright runner that does not avoid contact. That worked out well for Eric Dickerson, but linebackers now are the size of defensive tackles then. Additionally, Peterson does not catch balls out of the backfield. If I am going to spend a top five pick on a running back, he had better be complete.

Don't Draft J-Mark. Don't get me wrong, the Browns need a QB, BAD! The pricetag for Russell is just too high and the Browns would be forced to package a bunch of picks to jump two spots to get him, and while I think it is neat that he has had good workouts I am not sold on him enough to gamble the package it would take to get him. So I guess that means I am rooting for the Browns to draft Thomas or Quinn. I really don't think they can go wrong with either, I am not a fan of either, but they both would aptly fill gaping holes in the Browns roster. What more could you ask for?

Hiko: ...take JaMarcus Russell, QB, LSU.

This, of course, is dependent upon the supposed Randy Moss to Green Bay for Aaron Rodgers trade. If that deal happens, then Oakland will no longer be in the market for a QB at #1 overall, and will probably snatch up the consensus Best Player In The Draft, Calvin Johnson. Detroit's moves through Free Agency and trades scream that they will pass on Joe Thomas and Adrian Peterson, and pick up a QB to be groomed to eventually take over for the aging Jon Kitna. I believe that QB will be Brady Quinn.

That leaves the Browns to choose from JaMarcus Russell or Adrian Peterson. Despite the

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need for a franchise RB (Jamal Lewis ain't it at this point in his career), the Browns will feel they have a stop-gap at that position and will jump for one of the biggest boom-or-bust players to enter the draft in quite some time - JaMarcus Russell. With his size and touch and arm strength, he could be one of the best ever to play the game. He could also be a Kyle Boller-esque washout.

If the Moss-to-GB trade does not happen, however, then I see Oakland sticking with Russell, Detroit taking Brady Quinn, and the Browns either taking Adrian Peterson or accepting a trade down with some team desperate to snatch up Calvin Johnson (like Minnesota). I'd be fine with all these scenarios, since they all get the Browns a good player at a position of need.

Of course, with the Browns, what position isn't a need? Punter?

Jeff Rickel: ...I'm going to meld what I hope will happen and what I think will happen into the same answer. I believe the Browns will trade the third pick. I'm not sure to whom they will trade it to. If Calvin Johnson is still available and other teams are interested then I could see them getting some nice swag from the Bucs in draft pick conversation. It might not stop there. Frankly, I think Savage may look to trade down more than once. Rumor has it that the Browns like Brady Quinn at the moment but that could be a smokescreen to try to drive up value.

The player I would most like to land in the first round would be a reach at #3, though my tastes and Savage's may be different. I'm hoping for a second trade down so we can add picks and land Amobi Okoye from Louisville. However that wasn't the question.

What I think is more likely to happen is that we swap with Tampa if Johnson is still there, netting some additional picks in the process, and then draft Adrian Peterson at #4. We could trade down from that point too, but Okoye may not be the target. Savage may be looking at Levi Brown if he is able to trade down further in the first or he could be eyeing one of the two top rated CBs seeing as the Browns struck out with Hood in free agency and do need help desperately there.

DJK: ...won't bother to pay any attention to what the Raiders or Lions do with the selection, because they'll be too busy soiling their pajamas (Randy), tearfully gabbing on the phone with L'il JaMarky (Phil), and soiling their pajamas (Romeo) after having dealt up to make JaMarcus Russell a Cleveland Brown. And with no 2nd round pick to look forward to, I'll look down at the spread my girlfriend put together, take a deep breath, and wonder what the @!&\$ I'm going to do for the next ten hours.