

## Feeling a Draft: The Safeties

Written by {ga=jta1975}

Saturday, April 09 2011 4:00 AM - Last Updated Sunday, April 10 2011 8:35 AM

---



In part two of the "Feeling a Draft" series we'll be reviewing the safeties. Remember we are looking at the position in relation to what the Browns need and how they might look at various players in the draft. Last year the Browns took a guy nobody else rated as high as he was picked when they tabbed T.J. Ward in the second round.

Taking Ward told us something many already knew when studying Tom Heckert and that namely is his ability to pick out traits in a DB that will make that player a successful NFL player.

In Heckert's time with the Eagles they picked DBs all over the draft who went on to have success in the league. The Browns as an organization showed great confidence in their draft team by selecting Ward at the top of the second round when most others had him rated in rounds 3-5.

In T.J. Ward the Browns have a versatile safety with the speed (4.47) and range to cover like a FS to go along with the toughness and thump of a SS. Because Ward could conceivably play either position I think the Browns could target a FS or a SS somewhere in this draft. Knowing they drafted Larry Asante last year (who is pretty much an in the box safety) tells us they would prefer Ward to stay at FS but he does have the ability to play either position so we didn't narrow our list to one type of safety for the sake of this piece.

This year the safety class is not blessed with top 10 talent. Actually there will probably not be a safety taken in the first round. The class does have boat load of mid round prospects, some of which could turn into really good players. Let's look at a few candidates I like at the safety spot.

### Early Rounds (1-2)

## Feeling a Draft: The Safeties

Written by {ga=jta1975}

Saturday, April 09 2011 4:00 AM - Last Updated Sunday, April 10 2011 8:35 AM

---

**Rahim Moore- UCLA** Moore should be the first safety off the board. He had great production in college with 180 tackles and 14 interceptions. Normally a safety with his ball skills and production would be a lock for the first round but he is not an elite athlete nor does he have the ability to play around the line of scrimmage.

Moore has great hips, natural instincts, and understands route concepts better than any other safety in the draft but he has a thin frame and needs to get stronger (11 reps in the bench press). He lacks great straight ahead speed but makes up for his lack of speed (4.6) with superior instincts and route recognition. When tackling Moore lacks thump but does a fairly decent job in the open field. His great hips and coverage skills make him ideal for teams who favor man coverage but his soft run support makes him one dimensional.

### Mid Rounds (3-5)

**Chris Culliver- South Carolina** I am going to label him as a safety even though some have him listed as a CB. He played and started his first two years at safety before moving to CB this year but he only played half the season before he tore a pectoral muscle.

He is by far the most explosive athlete of all the safety candidates, which is apparent by his 4.36 40-yd time and his 39in vertical. He has very good ball skills and brings a special teams background including being the Gamecocks all-time leading kickoff returner. He still needs to add bulk and get better in run support because he sometimes tries to rely on the Polamalu shoulder-to-thigh tackling technique rather than making a solid form tackle. This hurts him by getting him off balance and sometimes causes him to drop his head. He plays the half-field well but he can also count on his speed too much by baiting and coming up empty. He can cover and run with any TE and can surely cover the slot WR in the NFL. He has the most potential of all the safeties.

**Jaiquawn Jarrett- Temple** Jarrett is a hard working kid with a high ceiling. He already excels in opening up his hips and exploding to the ball in coverage and he attacks the run with the passion of a LB. He fills running lanes as aggressively as any safety in this draft. The kid is also as durable as it gets, which is evident by the jaw dropping fact he played in every game in his college career despite initially being a walk-on. Jarrett also took over the starting job six games into his freshman year but never gave up his special teams duties throughout his career. He has improved his instincts by learning how to watch film and translating that film study information to production on the field. His negatives are his lack of elite ball skills needed to

## Feeling a Draft: The Safeties

Written by {ga=jta1975}

Saturday, April 09 2011 4:00 AM - Last Updated Sunday, April 10 2011 8:35 AM

---

convert big plays and also in proving he can handle the increased level of competition in the NFL.

**DeAndre McDaniel- Clemson** DeAndre is flat-out an incredibly gifted athlete. He was the number one rated DB in the country coming out of high school and his production in college is unmatched by any other prospect: 285 tackles, 18.5 tackles for loss, two sacks, 15 interceptions, 16 quarterback pressures, 20 pass breakups. These numbers speak for themselves. He has played both SS and LB during his tenure at Clemson and has performed well at both. The thing that sets him apart from every other SS (and most every other safety period) are his superior ball skills. If the ball is in any place he can get his 10 1/8-inch hands on he will snatch it for sure. His coverage skills and size will be issues that weigh him down. He has to work hard just to stay in at the 220lb range and I worry he will grow out of the safety position in the NFL. Other negatives include his hips and his ability to change direction. Because of these issues he'd surely become a target in man-to-man coverage which would limit the schemes he can play. He has no issues in the run game as his physicality is clear when watching him support the run.

**Deunta Williams- UNC** Williams' height (6-2), weight (206) and arm length (33 1/4) give him the ideal specs for a safety in the NFL. Combine that with his natural athleticism and he has the best 'total package' skill set of all the safeties. Williams was recruited as a WR and he was one of the better ones in the country coming out of high school. He ended up stepping onto campus, moving to DB and starting every single game that he was eligible to start. It always says a lot about an athlete when he can step onto campus and immediately be the best player out there. The WR pedigree translates to him having superb ball skills and taking great angles. Williams also has no fear when supporting the run. He needs to stay disciplined when doing so because he has a tendency to go for big hits and doesn't wrap when tackling.

Williams suffers from the things that scare NFL teams the most. He is prone to issues like mental mistakes, lapses in concentration, or a perceived lack of interest or effort which is why he isn't rated higher. He will also have to prove the injury (broken leg) he suffered in the bowl game has healed while also fielding questions on the 4 game suspension he served at the beginning of the year for allegedly accepting agent gifts.

### Late Rounds (6-7)

**Jeron Johnson- Boise St.** Jeron Johnson would more than a compliment to T.J. Ward. He

## Feeling a Draft: The Safeties

Written by {ga=jta1975}

Saturday, April 09 2011 4:00 AM - Last Updated Sunday, April 10 2011 8:35 AM

---

would be more like a mirror reflection of Ward. If most of you saw these guys wearing the same number you probably would not even be able to tell them apart. They are the same weight, height, and have the same athletic measurements. Whether those traits translate to similar results in the NFL is yet to be seen. I will say this guy is a four year starter with over 320 tackles in that time frame. He fills like a LB and has the speed (4.51) to cover the deep ball. He can cover man-to-man fairly well, although he was not asked to do so much in college.

Johnson led his team the last three years in tackles so while he fills fast and hard he does need to wrap up more instead of going for the kill shot. He tends to use his shoulder too much and fails to wrap which most know can lead to way too many rushing yards for the opponent. His knock will be his height (5-10), ball skills, and wandering eyes. By wandering eyes I mean his tendency to get caught looking in the backfield instead of getting into his back pedal. He has gotten beaten deep in the past because he was paying too much attention to what is going on in the backfield instead of where the deepest WR on the field is.

**Chris Conte- Cal** Conte is exactly the kind of late round prospect that GMs will take a shot on. He is first year player at safety after playing his first 3 years as a backup CB. He has the size (6-3 200lb), speed (4.55), and strength (18 reps) to go with his CB type hips and ball skills. He is still learning the position so he can be a bit slow to open his hips and get deep but has the ability to get it done. He can match up with any TE and can cover the slot also. The thing that impresses the most about Conte is his toughness. Not so much that he has a big stick like some of the other prospects, but that he is an ex-CB who fills without hesitation. You don't see him shying away from contact and he tackles well in the open field. If he is given enough reps to get comfortable at the position he can develop into a good player.

**Most Upside- Chris Culliver** I don't think it is even close when you look at potential. This kid is hands down the best athlete and could even get drafted as a CB. He has the type of skill set that can scare the opposition's passing game because if he gets his hands on it he can put the ball in the end zone from anywhere on the field. His return skills would immediately become an asset upon drafting him.

The downside of taking him too high is that he could also turn into nothing more than a nickel back and kick returner.

**Projected Pick- Jeron Johnson** This was hard for me because my favorite player at this position is Jaiquawn Jarrett. But when analyzing needs at other positions and where guys will

## Feeling a Draft: The Safeties

Written by {ga=jta1975}

Saturday, April 09 2011 4:00 AM - Last Updated Sunday, April 10 2011 8:35 AM

---

get drafted Johnson becomes the big picture choice. I think the spot in the draft where you can potentially get him is the key factor.

You very rarely get to draft a guy in the later rounds who can become a starter fairly quickly and this kid is that guy. He has all the skills to be an impact type safety in the NFL and that is hard to overlook. Most of his faults are fixable and this will hit the coaches right in the heart. Most coaches love the challenge from guys with skills but bad habits because of the potential player that they see inside. I think he is just the type of smart football junkie with good football ability that can earn a starting spot within the first two years in the league and he will also be a special teams demon from day one.

**Stay Away- Rahim Moore** With the needs the Browns have and the fact Moore is really a one trick pony type of a player turns me off about picking him. If you balance where he will be picked versus what our needs are I don't think you get enough value unless he drops like a rock and the value becomes too much to pass up.

**Sleeper- Javes Lewis** Lewis is an interesting player who most people never saw play last year. He is only a junior as far as eligibility goes but he shocked everyone by coming out early. He started in 2009 next to T.J. Ward at Oregon only to lose that starting spot this past year. He was a solid player in 2009 and had over 70 tackles, 2 forced fumbles, 1 sack and 2 ints which are solid numbers for a first time sophomore starter.

The reason Lewis didn't start this year was because Oregon changed the SS position to one called the Rover and they moved a former LB into that spot. Oregon really played with only one true safety and that guy was a second team All-American. In the one start Lewis got this year he did have a pick. The Browns have a leg up in scouting the kid because he was a starter for Oregon at the same time T.J. Ward was there, so they've seen him. He is 6-1, 205lbs and ran a 4.5 forty for his pro day. If you see tape of him playing you will see him excel in run support and show good change of direction in the passing game. He is just the type of UDFA or seventh round pick who can make it in the NFL because he has a history of being a special teams player with an NFL type skill set. He tops all of that off with a big dose of 'want to'.

Part1- Gm's and Scouts can be found here: <http://bit.ly/ehLnLy>

## Feeling a Draft: The Safeties

Written by {ga=jta1975}

Saturday, April 09 2011 4:00 AM - Last Updated Sunday, April 10 2011 8:35 AM

---

Part2- Quarterbacks here: <http://bit.ly/fbFbLZ>