



The NFL draft is still nearly 3 weeks away, which can only mean one thing: 100 more iterations Tony Grossi's mock draft. Catch the excitement.

Not to pick on Grossi too much, but this really is the problem with the NFL offseason at the moment. The labor issues are complex and the only thing really happening at the moment. Most beat writers like Grossi don't have the inclination to understand them and use the excuse that the public doesn't care as a way of masking their own laziness.

They just repeat the line about billionaires fighting with millionaires to shorthand the entire discussion without every pausing to think that the more money at stake the more complex the issues.

So they just shy away from the difficult and give us any number of mind numbing mock drafts, some copy editor slaps a headline on it and voila!, news.

Just Friday morning, Grossi submitted his 7th (7th!) mock draft on an unsuspecting public. Because I tend to have the attention span of a puppy when it comes to this sort of thing, I give it all the attention it deserves, which is very little.

First of all, this is just crystal ball gazing taken to high art. The fact that someone like Mel Kiper, Jr. chose to make a living out of it doesn't somehow elevate it from alchemy to chemistry nor does it mean that every beat reporter with an internet connection suddenly because a quasi-expert like Kiper.

Second, did I mention it's Grossi's 7th (7th!) iteration of a mock draft? That means that when he has a hole to fill in the PD's ever shrinking sports section in the next several days, out will come mock drafts versions 8 and 9. Sooner or later he's bound to get something right.

On the scale of problems plaguing just the sports world, the proliferation of meaningless NFL mock drafts ranks just below Gloria James' temper. In other words, the fact that the PD uses such things as a proxy for real news or analysis is relatively harmless, at least in the short term.

But the problem is exactly that: the PD and newspapers like it use such things as a proxy for real news. They are cost conscious, like every employer these days, but they have completely abdicated any responsibility for covering the real stories of the NFL to those on the national scene that apparently do it better in favor of having their local hack twiddle his thumbs, read a few magazines, and draw up mock drafts.

Maybe it doesn't occur to those running the PD and other newspapers why they continue to fall short in the public's imagination, but perhaps it has something to do with no longer being an outlet for actual sports news, at least the kind of actual sports news that's been ferreted out organically.

Reporters like Grossi can only give the newspaper what they're willing to pay for and at this juncture it looks like they aren't willing to pay for much, so in some sense he may not be at fault. But in other ways, he and his ilk are part of the problem because they shy away from the more complex in favor of the inane. Just because his employers are tight with a buck isn't an excuse for being tight with one's own creativity.

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## Lingering Items--Cautionary Tale Edition

Written by {ga=gdbenz}

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