



Cleveland came into Friday with huge needs still at Right Tackle, Wide Receiver, and Linebacker, with RT being the most pressing of the 3.

Let's just say that if the Browns went into the season with Oneil Cousins starting, someone was going to get killed.

Fortunately, Tom Heckert wasn't blind to this fact...

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### **Regarding Mitchell Schwartz**

Here is why I am fine with this pick: Guys like Cordy Glenn, Jonathan Martin, and Stephen Hill - guys that I would've been fine with at 22 - were all still on the board at 37, and Heckert liked Schwartz more. When asked why he took Schwartz over the more heralded Glenn and Martin, [Heckert responded](#)

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*"We just thought he was a better football player. Obviously, that is what we thought or we would*

*have taken the other guy. He is a big kid, he's athletic, he played left tackle, he has played right tackle in the past. He is a very solid guy. He played well at the senior bowl. He is just a good player."*

I'm not going to pretend I'm an expert at judging OL talent. The only time you really notice a Guard or a Tackle is when they're getting beat, and I noticed that all too often last year at the RT position. The Browns went ahead and addressed this with a high pick. Very happy with the selection.

He's the starting RT as of Day 1, but his experience at LT (35 starts) gives him versatility as well. Here's the [NFLDraftScout.com review](#) :

*Mitchell has NFL bloodlines. His brother, Geoff, was the Panthers' seventh-round pick out of Oregon in 2008, started in 2010 but was injured last year and recently signed with the Minnesota Vikings. Mitchell Schwartz was a model of consistency at Cal, starting 51 games, 35 at left tackle and 16 at right tackle. He credits diverse blocking schemes at Cal for upgrading his overall play. And that play was impressive at the Senior Bowl workouts, where scouts raved about his the way he handled some of the best pass rushers in the country. That was particularly surprising because most scouts believed he projected as a right tackle for the NFL.*

*Positives: Started 51 career games (35 at left tackle, 16 at right tackle) with a sturdy frame, 33-inch arms and continues adding bulk. Plays with appropriate wide base and intelligent, instincts and agility to seal the edge. Aggressive extending with power to punch and looks comfortable in space. High-effort, high-intangibles versatile backup prospect.*

*Negatives: Not physically imposing and has average overall strength. Upper body gets over his feet too often and he easily loses his balance. Whiffs on blocks after beaten initially and lacks range and lateral quickness. Plays too high and without proper leverage, pad level and can be passive. Back injury in 2011 spring must be investigated.*

## Regarding John Hughes

When the Browns traded down from 67 to 87 in the 3rd (picking up a 4th rounder along the way), I assumed it was because they had targeted a player that they were pretty sure would still be there in 20 picks.

This turned out to be very true, since they targeted a player that most scouts felt was a 5th-7th round pick (with 4th round being the very earliest).

Mr. Heckert, why did you take him there?

*"There were a couple of guys on the board that we liked, and we just thought they would be there later on, so we decided to get another fourth round pick... To be honest, we were holding our breath there a little bit with this last one. I was getting a little concerned that I shouldn't have made the trade, but it came down that John (Hughes) was still there and we did that."*

*"We debated on whether staying there and taking him. He was the guy we were going to take if we stayed, but we thought, and we got lucky, that we could get him later on."*

*"I really don't know (why he was projected to go much lower). It is funny because everyone was talking about (Derek) Wolfe, the other kid. We liked (Hughes). I haven't talked to anybody about him yet, I will talk to somebody tonight. I don't know where other scouts had him or where other teams had him, I really don't."*

OK, I get that you liked the guy and thought he had a 3rd round grade. That's all well and good and let's hope you're right. But you can't be completely oblivious to where the player is valued by the other teams. You have to have a solid idea where he is likely to go so that you don't overpay for him. There's a habenero salsa (Xochitl) that I really like and would be willing to pay \$15/jar for, but I'm not going to pay \$15 for it at Store A when I can get it for \$7.50 at Store B.

Mike Mayock did say on the NFL Network that Hughes had been rising up the draft boards, but it just seems like the Browns often operate on a different plane of existence than the rest of the league. Which might explain their transcendental on-field performances.

All right, let's disregard the WHERE of the pick for now and look at the WHAT.

Good luck finding scouting reports on Hughes - this one is from [NFL.com](http://NFL.com) :

*Hughes is a fifth-year senior from Cincinnati who started for two years at defensive tackle. He has the size to compete inside at the next level, but he lacks athletic ability and has been rather unproductive to this point in his career. He could get selected in a later round by a team that falls in love with him, but he is more likely to get a shot as a free agent. The pre-draft process will be of extra importance for Hughes, as he needs to prove he has the skills to match his frame.*

*STRENGTHS Hughes is a big man who until his senior year had mostly been a gap-filler. He uses his hands well to stay off blocks and displays good technique. He can defeat single blocks fairly easily and plays with good instincts. It's obvious that he is diagnosing plays early after recognizing blocking schemes.*

*WEAKNESSES Hughes has numerous issues in his play that, if not fixed early, could severely limit his NFL prospects. He seems lazy at times and rarely chases plays down on the perimeter. As a run defender, he is capable of getting through blocks but often looks shell-shocked once he gets in the backfield. He needs to finish with more force; at times Hughes would be neutralized by offensive linemen because of his poor effort and pad placement.*

Listen, I don't dislike picking a DT here, even though it's not an area of huge need. You want to rotate your DT's to keep them fresh, and you want the guys that rotate in to be more effective than Scott Paxson and Brian Schaefering.

A reason he might be considered a late-riser is that his Senior year vastly eclipsed his previous seasons - he had 51 tackles, 12.5 tackles for a loss, and five sacks in 2011 - all pretty solid for a

DT. All reports seem to think he has the requisite size and does a good job of shedding blocks. Heckert gushed about his ability to "stack and shed" (which sounds like great attributes for a warehouse worker too) - we have to assume that he sees tremendous upside in Hughes and once again felt compelled to make sure he got "his guy" rather than wait and try to get him more in the area where he was commonly slotted.

With such a David Veikune-esque reach on Hughes, we'll just have to wait and hope that his production doesn't match Veikune's.

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### Regarding Travis Benjamin

Since the Browns didn't have quite enough picks to address the WR in the first 2 rounds - and obviously didn't feel any WR available at 67 or 87 was so good that they couldn't get one later - Cleveland fans entered Saturday wondering what they would do.

My hope was that the Browns would take a speed merchant in the 4th. He didn't necessarily have to be the highest-rated WR on the board, but he had to be fast. The Browns have one starting-level WR (Greg Little), one effective slot guy (Jordan Norwood), and a bunch of possession-type mediocrity everywhere else. They have almost nil as far as true deep threats.

Heckert did me a favor and selected exactly the kind of guy I was looking for, Miami (FL) WR Travis Benjamin, a 5'10 guy that runs a 4.36 - a poor man's Desean Jackson, if you will.

Will Benjamin be a starting WR for this team? Doubtful. But he'll be on the field plenty, and now that the Browns have a QB capable of throwing the deep ball, I see them heaving one or two Benjamin's way every game just to keep the opposing Defenses honest. In this way, Benjamin's production will not be measured by the number of catches he has, but by his ability to pull a couple guys out of the box and open up the running/short passing game.

I love this pick. Here's [some stuff](#) on Travis:

*Benjamin's game is all about speed. He struggled to produce consistently in Miami's offense, in part due to questionable hands and in part due to inconsistent quarterback play. But Benjamin ran a 4.36-second 40-yard dash leading up to the NFL Draft, and with a 38-inch vertical and a 9'11" broad jump he's a big play waiting to happen as a return man.*

*Strengths: Outstanding straight-line speed and is a legitimate vertical threat. Shows good start/stop ability and natural burst to accelerate to top speed and create separation from defenders. Possesses multiple gears to race away from the opposition. Does a nice job in space with fluid body control and natural flexibility. Flashes good coordination to make tough catches. Electric return man on special teams and adds value as both a punt and kick returner. Started each of his four seasons with the Hurricanes, totaling 131 catches for 2,146 yards (16.4) and 13 scores.*

*Weaknesses: Undersized with a small body type and short stature. Lean frame with little bulk or muscle. Needs to add strength, but really doesn't have much room to get bigger.*

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### Regarding James-Michael Johnson

At this point, the Browns should've been about Best Player Available, but if you were to press on the greatest unaddressed need, you'd have to say Linebacker. Well, Heckert addressed it here (as much as a 4th round pick can be considered "addressing" something).

As with Benjamin and Hughes, it's unlikely that Johnson starts in 2012, but it is very likely that he contributes. Linebackers don't rotate as much as DL's do, but he'll see the field in certain situations and definitely on Special Teams. He's productive, logging 188 tackles in the last 2 years. Here's [the 411](#) on Johnson:

*Nevada defenders have a tough time trying to make people take notice of their play because of the team's offense, which ranked fourth in the FBS in total yardage in 2010. But Johnson's toughness and production has not escaped notice of WAC coaches, who named him second-team all-conference in each of the last two seasons, and NFL scouts. Johnson played in all 13 games with 10 starts as a redshirt freshman. Included in his 49 tackles were 12.5 for a loss, and he also had 1.5 sacks, an interception and forced fumble. He started every game over the next two seasons, making 57 tackles, 11.5 for loss, and five pass break-ups on the outside in 2009 before moving to the middle as a junior (88 tackles, eight TFL, 2.5 sacks, three forced fumbles). Teams running base schemes should see Johnson as one of the top true mike linebackers in this draft because of his ability to come downhill against the run.*

*Positives: Tough between-the-tackles defender who shimmies past blockers to fill lanes. Downhill, aggressive run-stuffer with enough strength to stop ballcarriers in the hole. Vocal leader and team captain. Shows some flexibility to loop to the quarterback as a pass rusher. Gets his hands in the passing lanes. Effort is there in coverage.*

*Negatives: Limited vision and is easily fooled by misdirection. Lacks range and lateral agility in coverage. Not often used as a blitz. Average at best changing direction. Builds to top speed and must take the right line to beat backs to the edge*