



I'm feelin' this draft.

I'll start by saying I have no way of knowing if the individual players selected will amount to anything. What I know specifically about Joe Haden, T.J.Ward, Montario Hardesty, Shawn Lauvao, Larry Asante, Carlton Mitchell and Clifton Geathers could literally fit in a thimble with room for what I truly know about Colt McCoy's pro prospects.

I'm not Mel Kiper Jr. and I don't pretend to be. Like most Browns fans I've seen nearly all of these guys play at the collegiate level while flipping through channels on Saturdays but I'm not spending what little free time I have breaking down tape to the point I can tell you whether Taylor Mays' hips are too stiff or whether Bruce Campbell can be motivated to play after he gets paid.

But I loved the approach and the process the Browns front office employed.

It's clear to me that the Browns assessed their football team from top to bottom and identified area where an infusion of talent was necessary. To be honest that couldn't have taken very long as any area they started analyzing was likely rife with shortcomings.

And when the Wheel of Suck stopped spinning it clearly landed on "Defensive Secondary". The Browns, after a lot of spinning and smoke screens, went back to where many thought they'd go months ago with the selection of Joe Haden. Haden was recognized as the draft's premier cornerback even after his slow 40-yard time at the Combine. Running it again at his Florida Pro Day Haden was impressive and restored his status as the best CB in the draft. He's bright, he's a willing worker, he has tremendous closing and, in what will become a common theme with this Browns draft, he's aggressive and hard nosed.

Haden will likely step in and start right away opposite of Eric Wright. If he lives up to his billing the Browns just got very good at the corner position literally overnight.

Not content with the upgrade Haden likely brings, the Browns went DB right away in the second round too. Having addressed the pass defense with Haden they turned their attention to Ward, a safety with more forced fumbles than interceptions in his collegiate career. Ward is a stout, aggressive safety who likes to and is capable of affecting the running game as well. He had some injury issues at Oregon but he's also noted to have a tremendous work ethic and excellent instincts.

Asante rounded out the Browns' focus on defensive backs when he was selected in the 5th round out of Nebraska. Not known for his ball-hawking skills Asante is highly regarded in his ability to defend the run.

Hardesty is the 6'0", 225lb thunder to Jerome Harrison's lightning. The RB from Tennessee has very good speed for a bigger man (4.49 40-yard at the Combine) and, at least in college, he racked up big yards after contact. That will be put to the test in the AFC North but the Browns obviously liked the kid enough to give up a couple of late round picks to grab him in the 2nd round.

McCoy slid hard into the 3rd round despite his Texas pedigree. You have to love the value of grabbing him when the Browns did, the 85th pick in the draft. His arm strength is questioned but he's deadly accurate underneath and he has a very quick release. The release and accuracy fits perfectly in the West Coast offense the Browns will employ and McCoy's biggest assets, his leadership, work ethic and intangibles fit the theme that the front office was obviously looking for.

Loved the Format

I was against the NFL going away from the prior format of starting the draft on a Saturday and finishing it on a Sunday. I loved the all day event and the parties that accompanied it. But I have to say that after sitting through a big part of the entire production I enjoyed how they broke it into a three day draft this year.

I still found time to meet up with some friends Thursday night for some food and drink and the kids drafted on Thursday night got their moment in the sun. That was their night. But my interest didn't wane for the second and third rounds. Instead it actually increased. That day in between really drove up the interest in the Friday night activities because you had all day to analyze what players remained and who best fit the needs of your organization. Maybe in a draft that's not as deep as this one was that won't be the case, but for this draft there was plenty of intrigue remaining after Thursday's festivities.

Saturday was a little less exciting but few people watch that portion of the draft anyway. Still, Gil Brandt on Sirius' NFL Network made an interesting point: in the last four Pro Bowls 70 players on the rosters were drafted in rounds 4-7. There's still substantial value remaining on the board

even on Saturday and the teams that mine those gems do themselves a huge service.

I liked it, I enjoyed nearly all of it and I'll look forward to it again next April.

Back on Track

After a hiccup Thursday night in Chicago the Cavaliers got back into form Sunday. They turned a game that was close late in the second quarter into an absolute laugher starting with about four minutes remaining before the half. Using another 45 foot LeBron James jumper at the 3rd quarter buzzer the Cavs demoralized and embarrassed Chicago in a 121-98 blowout win.

The win gave the Cavaliers a commanding 3-1 series lead and the series is likely to end Tuesday night in 'The Q' when the teams get together for game five.

Let's just get this series done and over with. I'm tired of talking about Joakim Noah just to give this series some sort of drama. Noah and the Bulls just aren't worth the energy. You've got them down. Now it's time to step on their throats and finish them off.

Elsewhere, some people might be surprised that the Lakers and Thunder are deadlocked at 2-2 in the Western Conference series.

If you're surprised that OKC is giving Los Angeles all they can handle you haven't been paying attention. Keep in mind that the Lakers won the 1st seed in the west by winning 57 games. OKC earned the 8th seed with 50 wins. There's not a huge difference from the start. Add in the fact that the Thunder have the best player in the game not named LeBron James (Kevin Durant), that they are very long and that they have a youthful exuberance that allows them to play without pressure or conscience and it's not surprising at all that this series is 2-2 today.

I fully expect the Lakers to win that series. Maybe even in 6 games. But they're going to get a game and a challenge from the Thunder every step of the way and the Lake Show may just find their second round series is a bit easier than this opening series for their style of play and short bench.

Meh

That's all I have for the Indians.

They have few watchable or compelling players and they're 2-4 on this road trip that started in Minnesota, passed through Oakland this weekend and ends up in Los Angeles against the Angels early this week. Winning one game in a three game series may stir the imagination of those optimistic enough to hold out hope that the Indians can contend in the AL Central but the bottom line is that pace makes you a really rotten ball club.

Still, I can't get bent about this team when they lose any more than I can get excited if and when they win a game.

I mentioned in a past 'Wrap' how I couldn't get excited about the Tribe season that was approaching. Well, baseball started three weeks ago and I'm still in the same boat. I still think the offense will eventually roll around. Guys like Grady Sizemore have a track record for producing and guys like Matt LaPorta and Jhonny Peralta are simply better than what they've shown thus far.

But even when they start to produce I think you're looking at a sub .500 ballclub that will use 2010 to find itself and start to weed out guys who will be building blocks from those who will soon be building buildings.