

DAILY NEWS CLIPPINGS
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Kiszla: Denver Broncos need the NFL draft to provide super boost

By Mark Kiszla
The Denver Post
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John Elway returned to the Broncos to win a Super Bowl.

But the Broncos won't win a Super Bowl unless Elway improves his way of building a football team.

To become champions, the Broncos need to be more than quarterback Peyton Manning and 52 interchangeable parts.

If Denver wants to win the Super Bowl, then the mission of Elway should be to draft a defensive lineman with more tackles in his future than 31-year-old DeMarcus Ware, who will cost the Broncos \$13 million this year after being signed as a free agent from Dallas.

Granted, it's not easy to find an impact player with the 31st selection in the opening round, where the Broncos are slated to pick next month. This just in: Jadeveon Clowney of South Carolina won't be available when it is Denver's turn. But my eye has been on Minnesota defensive tackle Ra'Shede Hageman, a 6-foot-5, 310-pound beast with flawed techniques, since I gave him one of three slots on my Heisman ballot in December.

Of course, Elway pays director of player personnel Matt Russell and his scouting department good money to know far more about the pool of college talent than what a knucklehead columnist can bring to the conversation. Cornerback, wide receiver and defensive line, however, seem to be the positions stocked deep enough in this draft for Denver to find a player who can make a significant contribution as a rookie.

And I do know this: Even if you want to blame bad luck or lack of opportunity, linebacker Von Miller, safety Rahim Moore, defensive tackle Derek Wolfe, quarterback Brock Osweiler, defensive tackle Sylvester Williams and running back Montee Ball — the marquee players from the three draft classes of Elway's reign — have been unable to contribute in a truly big way for a franchise whose attitude is Super Bowl or bust.

Free agency is the quick fix of an NFL franchise. It's the two-minute drill of building a roster. It's very dramatic. And it suits Elway perfectly.

The NFL draft builds the foundation and establishes the personality of a team. Scouting is tedious work, best suited for football geeks, which might help explain why Josh McDaniels was better at drafting players than Elway.

It seems like something more than a coincidence that some of the best young players brought to the franchise by McDaniels have been allowed to walk away from Denver. It was nice knowing you, Knowshon Moreno, Zane Beadles and Eric Decker.

Sure, the NFL is transient work. Roster turnover is inevitable and, for the Broncos, it was absolutely necessary to erase a chunk of bad institutional memory after losing by five touchdowns to Seattle in the Super Bowl.

The most prominent feature of the locker room in Dove Valley, however, seems to have become a revolving door, which spins in a blur that swallows Elvis Dumervil, spits out Shaun Phillips and ushers in Ware as the pass rusher du jour.

This is not to suggest giving a \$57 million contract to talented veteran cornerback Aqib Talib was a bad idea in the effort to strengthen Denver's secondary.

But money doesn't buy loyalty, so it's hard to expect Talib to become a man who strengthens the fabric of this team's personality to anywhere near the same extent as cornerback Chris Harris, who fought and scratched his way on the roster as an undrafted free agent in 2011.

Ware and Talib are outstanding football players. But, in the Denver locker room, they are transients. As coach John Fox has taught me, in the cutthroat business of the NFL, even good men will abandon the team's mission in a heartbeat if losses threaten team unity.

Denver won championships in the 1990s with Elway and Shannon Sharpe, Terrell Davis and Steve Atwater. They were more than great players. They were Broncos.

Elway bleeds orange.

You can't sign a veteran from out of town and expect him to bleed orange.

Only the draft can put the orange in the Broncos.

Broncos draft rewind: 2012

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
Saturday, April 12, 2014

As the guy at the top of the football flow chart for the Denver Broncos for the last three seasons, John Elway has now overseen three drafts for the team.

The Broncos have made 23 picks in that time, found seven full-time starters -- with more expected to be added if things go as planned in May.

Let's go inside each of those three drafts to see how things have gone and where they are headed.

Today: 2012.

First pick: Derek Wolfe. The Broncos traded down twice before selecting Wolfe in the second round -- 36th overall. Wolfe then had a productive rookie year as a starter who played at both defensive end and defensive tackle with almost equal effectiveness. And during last spring's offseason there was talk Wolfe, in both word and deed, had the look of a future team captain.

But then he struggled at times early in the season after a neck injury in the preseason loss in Seattle -- he was taken from the field by ambulance. Then in late November Wolfe collapsed on the team bus with seizure-like symptoms and missed the remainder of the year.

He lost some weight as he spent weeks with doctors who tried to find the source of the issues. The Broncos briefly tried to put him back on the practice field on Christmas Day, but elected to shut Wolfe down after that workout. Broncos head coach John Fox has said multiple times in this offseason Wolfe is on track to try to re-gain his starting job in the defense.

Starters: 1.

This draft class has consistently led to questions about the team's approach and the lack of current starters. Linebacker Danny Trevathan (seventh round) is the only full-time starter among the seven picks at the moment.

Again, Wolfe is set to return to the starting lineup in the coming weeks and months. Defensive tackle/end Malik Jackson (fifth round) also has a prominent role in the line rotation and his playing time will only increase if he has another quality offseason. But Trevathan is the only pick from the draft who finished last season as an every-down player.

Best value pick: Trevathan. The Broncos -- for many of the same reasons they signed Wesley Woodyard as an undrafted and undersized linebacker out of Kentucky in 2008 -- selected Trevathan out of Kentucky.

Trevathan had led the Southeastern Conference in tackles and consistently displayed versatility and athleticism in his play. All he did last season was become the defense's most consistent player. He led the team in total tackles (124), solo tackles (84), tied for the team lead in interceptions (three) and knocked down 10 passes.

Now's the time: Running back Ronnie Hillman (third round) was handed the starting job when the Broncos opened their offseason work last spring and summer. He did not keep it.

And not only did he not keep it, he didn't handle the bump down the depth chart nearly as well as Knowshon Moreno had the year before in Hillman's rookie year. There are those with the team who believe Hillman showed some immaturity -- some to be expected from one of the youngest players on the '12 draft board with just two years in major college football -- and sulked a bit as the 2013 season wore on.

He was inactive on game days five times, did not play a snap in another game he was in uniform, and had an additional game he played in, but didn't get a carry. In all he carried the ball 55 times last season, or roughly at least 100 fewer times than the Broncos had hoped.

With the Broncos expected to take a look at the bigger backs available in this draft and with Montee Ball already penciled in as the starter, Hillman is in danger of finding out how quickly the NFL window closes for some.

He is still the big-play option in the backfield for the Broncos, but can't show that if he doesn't convince them he should be in the lineup.

Gone: C Philip Blake (fourth round). The Broncos tried him both at center and guard and he always seemed to be one of those players the personnel department thought more of than the coaching staff.

He never played his way into a serious consideration for playing time and they cut him last August. Blake is currently on the Arizona Cardinals roster.

More to come?: Ultimately, the player who will carry the signature of this class was their second pick in the second round: quarterback Brock Osweiler. He is Elway's hand-picked successor for Peyton Manning.

Osweiler is a big-framed (6-foot-8, 240 pounds), strong-armed passer. But what the Broncos, including Elway, liked about him most before that draft was his combination of confidence and work ethic. It takes work to play along side Manning and not every teammate, especially those who are his backup quarterbacks, are up for the pedal-to-the-metal intensity.

But Osweiler is a mentally tough guy who the team's veteran players say has commanded the huddle when he's had the chance in both practice and games. Sure, that's a long way from following a future Hall of Famer, but the Broncos still believe Osweiler is that guy.

It's why his age factored into the selection as well. He was just 21 when the 2012 draft rolled around, giving the team a buffer as compared to some of the other passers on the board that year.

It means Osweiler is set to enter his third season studying the game with one of the league's greatest-ever thinkers and Osweiler is still just 23.

Also, the Broncos, having moved Omar Bolden (fourth round) to safety, from cornerback, continue to hope he can find his way into some of their specialty packages. They drafted Bolden after he tore an ACL in his final season at Arizona State and moved him to safety last season, looking for more athleticism at the position in coverage looks.

Broncos hope for right free agent/draft mix

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
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The folks at the home office in Bristol, Conn., ran a quick-hit poll via Twitter Friday afternoon, asking which team among the Denver Broncos, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, New England Patriots and Washington Redskins had won free agency thus far.

And the Broncos, with 36 percent of the rapid-fire votes, were the winner.

Not the kind of sample size to make a definitive call, but the question behind that question is really whether teams want to consistently win in free agency. At least anecdotally the big spenders each March notoriously sit out the postseason in the season that follows despite being routinely showered with compliments as they toss the cash around because it all looks like they're "doing something" with players people know instead of ones they have to study.

Broncos executive vice president of football operations/general manager John Elway has consistently said he believes the long-term road to success is paved with the draft. That the Broncos "need to find and develop the guys who are Denver Broncos for a long, long time, into multiple contracts."

Elway is in his fourth offseason with the team and has said this year's spending binge -- Aqib Talib, DeMarcus Ware, T.J. Ward and Emmanuel Sanders -- was out of necessity, to fill needs Elway called "immediate" and "glaring."

And with the clock ticking on what remains of quarterback Peyton Manning's career (post-spinal fusion), to go with the fact the Broncos have let rare title opportunities get away not just once, but in back-to-back seasons, there is some urgency swirling around the team to position itself for another run this time around.

But history, at least in the salary cap era, continues to often be unkind to the March winners. The Broncos are still a fairly young team overall around Manning and the real guaranteed money they shelled out in the recent deals is less than most think and the contracts are constructed -- at least with the exception of Ware's three-year deal -- with minimal salary cap damage if things don't work out after the first

year.

All of that said, the draft-and-pay-your-own crowd largely sat out the spending spree this time around and the least active teams signed the fewest free agents from other teams. They also happen to be, for the most part, the teams that finished with the better records last season.

So, sure they needed less than those teams playing catch-up to try to break playoff droughts or welcome a new coaching staff. But the personnel executives around the league who track such things, as well as ESPN's Stats & Information group, show six 11-win teams (Saints, Seahawks, 49ers, Patriots, Chiefs and Colts) who signed four or fewer players from other teams in free agency.

The other three teams with four or fewer signings were the Packers, who made the playoffs at 8-7-1, Rams (7-9) and Cowboys (8-8).

Certainly the Broncos still consider themselves a draft-built team, at least that's how Elway has characterized it. But they have also spent lavishly to sign Manning in 2012 and this year's shopping spree.

In 2013, only guard Louis Vasquez' deal topped two years and he went on to be an All-Pro at 26, as the Broncos weren't nearly as aggressive with Pat Bowlen's checkbook at this time a year ago.

In the end, they've won March before -- two years ago with Manning's signing -- and won the division. They didn't win March last year with a more low-key approach overall and won the division.

So, they know they can't buy a title, but their hope continues to be all of the signings will help them earn one.

Free agency after one month

By Evan Kaplan

ESPN.com

Saturday, April 12, 2014

It has been one month since the beginning of NFL free agency and there has been no shortage of excitement.

Some of the game's top defensive players have packed their bags, while the Denver Broncos have looked to bolster a defense that was exposed in the Super Bowl.

Here is a look at some of the major free agency headlines so far:

Broncos back at it

The Broncos were among the most active teams in the first few days of free agency.

DeMarcus Ware, Aqib Talib, Emmanuel Sanders, T.J. Ward and Will Montgomery will all wear orange and blue in the fall. Denver is trying to become the third team in NFL history to lose the Super Bowl and then win the game in the following season (Cowboys in Super Bowl VI and Dolphins in Super Bowl VII).

But that effort has not been cheap.

The Broncos have spent more than \$65 million in guaranteed money this offseason – second only to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Denver seems to be following a similar script to its 2013 offseason, when the team signed five players in the first month of free agency, including Wes Welker and Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie.

While the Broncos have added some notable players, they have also lost some big names. On the offensive side of the ball, Denver will have to replace Zane Beadles, Eric Decker and Knowshon Moreno. On defense, the Broncos will look to make up for the loss of Champ Bailey and Rodgers-Cromartie, among others.

Bucs spend big

Most Guaranteed Money Spent
Since March 11

FA Additions

Buccaneers \$74.3M 15

Broncos \$65.5M 5

Raiders \$51.0M 11

Vikings \$50.2M 8

>>Includes re-signings

>>>Among reported contracts

The Buccaneers have added 15 free agents – the most of any team – so it is no surprise that the effort has been costly.

They've spent more than \$70 million in guaranteed money in the first month of free agency, including re-signings.

Unfortunately for the Bucs, spending money early in free agency does not necessarily mean the future is bright. Four teams spent at least \$50 million in the first month of free agency last season (Lions, Dolphins, Colts, Cowboys) and the Colts were the only one of those teams to make the playoffs in 2013.

Show them the money

In terms of contracts that have been reported, five of the six players to get at least \$20 million in guaranteed money were defensive players.

The Saints gave safety Jarius Byrd \$26.3 million – the most guaranteed money during the first month of free agency among reported contracts. The next highest was Branden Albert, Aqib Talib, Michael Johnson, DeMarcus Ware and then Vontae Davis (re-signed with team).

Pass rushers swap teams

Since the start of the 2010 season, Jared Allen and Julius Peppers have the first and third-most sacks among NFL North players.

Most Sacks Among NFC North Players Since 2010

Jared Allen	56.5
Clay Matthews	40.0
Julius Peppers	37.5

>>2010 was Peppers 1st season in division

Those two defensive ends changed teams within the division in the first month of free agency. Allen went from the Vikings to the Bears, while Peppers signed with the Packers after being released by Chicago.

Allen and Peppers rank in the top three in sacks among active players and Allen has 10 more sacks in his career, despite playing two fewer seasons.

Harris Jr. Looking to Extend Leadership Role

By Stuart Zaas
DenverBroncos.com
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ENGLEWOOD, Colo. – Entering 2014, only one defender on the Broncos' roster has appeared in more regular-season games with the club than cornerback **Chris Harris Jr.** – safety **David Bruton**.

Harris has played 47 games, including 31 starts since joining the team as a college free agent in 2011.

As a veteran on the Denver defense, he plans on expanding his leadership role this year.

"Yeah, I feel like last year, I definitely took a step up in the leadership role and was involved with a lot of the film work and gameplanning and stuff like that," Harris said. "I definitely feel like I could take another step in doing that and being a little bit more vocal in the locker room and making sure everyone is ready."

Both of last year's defensive captains are no longer Broncos, as the team released cornerback Champ Bailey and linebacker Wesley Woodyard signed with the Titans as an unrestricted free agent.

That leaves openings for leaders to step up and fill.

"Going into my fourth year here, learning under Champ, he kind of passed me the baton," Harris said. "I'm just excited to be able to step up into that role."

Although he's not the most experienced player in the Broncos' locker room, he is one of the longest-tenured with the club. He joins fellow class of 2011 rookies **Rahim Moore** and **Von Miller** as the defensive starters who have been with the team the longest behind **Kevin Vickerson**, who joined the team in 2010.

"Well, (cornerback Aqib) Talib has been in the league a little bit longer, but with this team, I've been here the longest," Harris said. "I feel like it's my secondary and that I'm definitely one of the leaders on the defense."

Watching the Mocks: 5.0

By Gray Caldwell
DenverBroncos.com
Saturday, April 12, 2014

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- Let's take an updated look at who the draft prognosticators across the Internet believe the Broncos will select with the No. 31 pick in the 2014 NFL Draft. The text below each prediction is what the writer had to say about the pick.

DenverBroncos.com Independent analyst Andrew Mason: Ohio State LB Ryan Shazier

There's a bit of a burst of good fortune that Shazier lands here; he can step in, play every down and fill what some perceive as a void.

ESPN's Todd McShay: Minnesota DT Ra'Shede Hageman

Hageman would provide the Broncos with good depth along the defensive line early on, and he has the physical tools to develop into a very good NFL defensive tackle. He has an elite combination of size (6-5, 310 pounds), speed, and initial burst and power, although there are some flaws in his technique and finishing ability. He's also previously dealt with some anger issues as a result of his challenging upbringing, but having a veteran leader like **DeMarcus Ware** around would help with Hageman's development.

Second-round pick: Clemson WR Martavis Bryant

Bryant could struggle a bit with the mental aspect of the game early on in his career, but he is a burner who can really stretch the field vertically.

Sports Illustrated's Don Banks: UCLA G Xavier Su'a-Filo

The Broncos offensive line got exposed by Seattle's defensive front in the Super Bowl. All the great work Denver has done this offseason to get locked and loaded and chase a ring again would go to waste if **Peyton Manning** didn't have time, or the good health, to work the pass pocket. Su'a-Filo is ready to start from Day 1, and he's versatile enough to play at either guard or tackle. Stanford's David Yankey is the other top-rated interior offensive lineman of which to keep track.

NFL.com's Daniel Jeremiah: Shazier

Keep an eye on Nevada guard Joel Bitonio with this pick, but Shazier's athleticism would be tough to pass up.

NFL.com's Mike Huguenin: Su'a-Filo

A CB or WR would be tempting, but Su'a-Filo is best true guard in draft and would end any concerns about position.

NFL.com's Chase Goodbread: Missouri DE Kony Ealy

Ealy is a versatile athlete who could play every down in a variety of roles in the Broncos front.

CBS Sports' Rob Rang: TCU CB Jason Verrett

The Broncos paid top dollar for **Aqib Talib** but with the talented cornerback having never played a full season in his seven-year NFL career, Denver would be wise to add fortification to the position in the draft. Verrett may lack size but what the 5-09, 189-pound Verrett lacks in bulk, he more than makes up with grit and athleticism.

Second-round pick: Fresno State WR Davante Adams

Replacing Eric Decker with a similarly reliable route-runner and hands-catcher like Adams shouldn't be this easy.

CBS Sports' Dane Brugler: Auburn DE Dee Ford

The Broncos battled numerous injuries to their pass rushers last season and despite signing DeMarcus Ware, Denver needs to continue and develop depth to their front-seven. Ford has the get-off quickness and motor to put dents in the backfield of opposing offenses.

Second-round pick: South Carolina WR Bruce Ellington

With Eric Decker no longer in Denver, the Broncos could add some young talent to the wide receiver position.

CBS Sports' Pete Prisco: BYU LB Kyle Van Noy

They have to get more athletic at linebacker. He could help.

CBS Sports' Will Brinson: Su'a-Filo

Plenty of other concerns for the Broncos, including a wideout and a cornerback, but they learned first hand during the Super Bowl how important protecting Peyton Manning up the middle truly is. Filo will replace the departed Zane Beadles.

Mason's Mock 5.0: If I Was GM

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
Saturday, April 12, 2014

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- In recent weeks, the mock drafts have focused on who I expect that each team will pick. But as Pro Days end and teams retreat into their meeting rooms to evaluate and plan their strategy, not much changes from week to week. So in Mock Draft 5.0, I'll focus on not on predictions, but what I would do if I were each team's general manager/final-say football authority and why:

1. HOUSTON (2-14): Trade the pick to Atlanta, which takes DE Jadeveon Clowney, South Carolina

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: QB Blake Bortles, Central Florida

Obviously, this takes a willing suitor. In this case, were I running the Falcons, a team in clear win-now mode with a quarterback in his prime and a 4-12 season that ought to be an aberration more than a trend. If Atlanta offers enough, the Texans can move down and still get one of the elite quarterbacks in this year's draft -- and probably at a more logical spot than No. 1.

2. ST. LOUIS (7-9, from Washington): OT Jake Matthews, Texas A&M

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same

There's fewer rough edges to Matthews' game than Greg Robinson's. He doesn't have to be the left tackle immediately, although he can be groomed for it. He doesn't have to be a right tackle, either; the Rams can move him around, and Matthews, like his father, should be able to handle it.

3. JACKSONVILLE (4-12); QB Johnny Manziel, Texas A&M

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: DE Jadeveon Clowney, South Carolina

I'm 5-foot-5. Height's overrated. Short man's disease, Napoleonic complex, call it what you will. But I'm not losing sleep over Manziel's height. His frame is a concern, and he will have to learn how to avoid contact. The sidelines and the safety they afford after a scramble must be his friends. But he can make all the necessary throws, and brings a presence unlike anything Jacksonville has had before.

4. CLEVELAND (4-12): WR Sammy Watkins, Clemson

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: QB Johnny Manziel, Texas A&M

Why Watkins? Because one good receiver isn't enough. Because he can complement Josh Gordon. And because the Browns can get a quarterback with their other first-round pick, and Brian Hoyer is good enough to start -- and could do very well with Gordon, Watkins and tight end Jordan Cameron as targets.

5. OAKLAND (4-12); LB Kahlil Mack, Buffalo

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: WR Sammy Watkins, Clemson

OK, if I were running the Raiders, I would be angry that Watkins isn't on the board here. But with Matt Schaub aboard, I have the luxury of not being forced to take a quarterback.

6. ATLANTA (4-12): Trade the pick to Houston, which takes QB Teddy Bridgewater, Louisville

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: OT Greg Robinson, Auburn

The Texans' trade-down gambit probably wouldn't have been possible without Bridgewater's shaky Pro Day.

7. TAMPA BAY (4-12): WR Mike Evans, Texas A&M

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: LB Kahlil Mack, Buffalo

At this point, the Bucs don't have enough good receivers to do what new offensive coordinator Jeff Tedford wants -- and not enough to give Josh McCown more than a fighting chance. Evans will help.

8. MINNESOTA (5-10-1): QB Blake Bortles, Central Florida

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: QB Teddy Bridgewater, Louisville

This slot feels more right for Bortles than No. 1, where I've had him projected to the Texans atop the draft. Not all of Bortles' film is stellar, and he, like the other quarterbacks in this class, has noticeable warts.

9. BUFFALO (6-10): OT Greg Robinson, Auburn

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: OT Taylor Lewan, Michigan

Robinson is just a smidgen more athletic and has greater upside than Lewan. It would surprise me if this scenario comes to pass, but Buffalo should be ecstatic if Robinson is available.

10. DETROIT (7-9): CB Justin Gilbert, Oklahoma State

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same.

This just feels right, if it comes to pass. Gilbert has athletic ability and potential unlike any other cornerback in this class.

11. TENNESSEE (7-9): LB Anthony Barr, UCLA

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: WR Mike Evans, Texas A&M

I can't pass up a potential stud pass-rusher here for a defense that doesn't have the outside explosion you want. Cornerback is a possibility here after Alterraun Verner's free-agent departure, but that can be addressed on Day Two.

12. N.Y. GIANTS (7-9): Trade the pick to Miami, which takes OT Taylor Lewan, Michigan

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: TE Eric Ebron, North Carolina

Lewan has dropped, and a feeding frenzy commences. The Giants might still be able to get Ebron by moving down six slots. Stay tuned.

13. ST. LOUIS (7-9): S "Ha Ha" Clinton-Dix, Alabama

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same.

I gave some thought to a receiver (Odell Beckham Jr., Marqise Lee), but both felt like reaches here, and the Rams have enough issues to where they don't have to reach.

14. CHICAGO (8-8): DT Aaron Donald, Pittsburgh

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same.

The best player on the board at an area where the Bears still need some work. The only positive from having a defense that was shredded as thoroughly as Chicago's is that there should be a premium defensive player on the board here, and Donald fits.

15. PITTSBURGH (8-8): CB Darqueze Dennard, Michigan State

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: LB Anthony Barr, UCLA

The AFC North doesn't have the quarterback/passing game challenges inherent in other divisions, like the NFC North, but Dennard still fills a need.

16. DALLAS (8-8): DT Timmy Jernigan, Florida State

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same.

Louis Nix is a possibility, but Jernigan is a bit better of a fit.

17. BALTIMORE (8-8): OT Zack Martin, Notre Dame

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: S Calvin Pryor, Louisville

The Ravens took care of left tackle by wisely re-signing Eugene Monroe after he stepped up his performance to an elite level following the trade from Jacksonville. Now Martin can take over the right side.

18. N.Y. JETS (8-8): S Calvin Pryor, Louisville

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: WR Odell Beckham Jr., LSU

Pryor has breakout potential, and as a former Ravens defensive coordinator, Rex Ryan understands the impact a safety like this can have on building a defense.

19. MIAMI (8-8): Trade the pick to the Giants, who take TE Eric Ebron, North Carolina

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: OT Zack Martin, Notre Dame

And the swap pays off, with the Giants picking up an extra selection later, while addressing a pressing need.

20. ARIZONA (10-6): DE Kony Ealy, Missouri

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same.

Ealy is a lower-risk pick than Dee Ford, who would also fit and merited strong consideration.

21. GREEN BAY (8-7-1): S Jimmie Ward, Northern Illinois

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: LB C.J. Mosley, Alabama

The more I watch Ward, the more I like his range, athleticism and instinct for the position.

22. PHILADELPHIA (10-6): WR Odell Beckham Jr., LSU

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: CB Darqueze Dennard, Michigan State

The decision to cut DeSean Jackson leaves a hole that Beckham can potentially fill.

23. KANSAS CITY (11-5): WR Marqise Lee, USC

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same.

Lee is a better fit for what the Chiefs need than Beckham, so the Eagles' decision works out well.

24. CINCINNATI (11-5): CB Bradley Roby, Ohio State

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same.

Pass rusher is a possibility, but the Bengals' aging cornerback corps will catch up to them at some point if it goes unaddressed.

25. SAN DIEGO (9-7): CB Kyle Fuller, Virginia Tech

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: NT Louis Nix, Notre Dame

The Chargers were caught short in the secondary at times last year, and in their attempt to dethrone the Broncos, coverage help is essential.

26. CLEVELAND (4-12, from Indianapolis): QB Derek Carr, Fresno State

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: LB Ryan Shazier, Ohio State

If Carr had been off the board, Eastern Illinois' Jimmy Garoppolo could be in play here.

27. NEW ORLEANS (11-5): LB/DE Dee Ford, Auburn

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: Same.

Ford isn't the ideal size, but his pass-rushing skills are an ideal fit for Rob Ryan's defense.

28. CAROLINA (12-4): G Xavier Su'a-Filo, UCLA

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: OT Cyrus Kouandijo, Alabama

The red flags on Kouandijo are a bit much to ignore, and Su'a-Filo is a sure-fire starter. Carolina's needs up front are numerous, so there's no reason to reach or take an unnecessary gamble.

29. NEW ENGLAND (12-4): LB C.J. Mosley, Alabama

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: DT Ra'Shede Hageman, Minnesota

A quick replacement for Brandon Spikes.

30. SAN FRANCISCO (12-4): WR Brandin Cooks, Oregon State

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: WR Kelvin Benjamin, Florida State

Cooks' skill set. a more ideal complement to Michael Crabtree and Vernon Davis.

31. DENVER (13-3): LB Ryan Shazier, Ohio State

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: LB Chris Borland, Wisconsin

There's a bit of a burst of good fortune that Shazier lands here; he can step in, play every down and fill what some perceive as a void.

32. SEATTLE (13-3): WR Kelvin Benjamin, Florida State

Mock Draft 4.0 Projection: G Xavier Su'a-Filo, UCLA

A replacement for Golden Tate -- and potentially a long-term upgrade.