

# Candidates for the Broncos' No. 5 pick

By Mike Klis

9NEWS

April 13, 2018

Here's a top 5 mock draft that may not go the way the Broncos would like:

1. Browns, Josh Allen
2. Bills (trade with Giants), Sam Darnold
3. Jets, Baker Mayfield
4. Browns, Saquon Barkley
5. Broncos, Josh Rosen/Quenton Nelson/Trade back

In some ways, the Broncos have more player options at No. 5 than the Browns do at No. 1. The Browns must take who they believe is the best quarterback. For the Broncos, at least two quarterbacks will be gone by the time they're on the clock with the No. 5 overall selection, and maybe three. The top non-quarterback player, and maybe the top two, maybe be gone by No. 5.

It seems No. 5 could be viewed as a so-close, yet so-far-away position. It's also a slot where the possibilities are many. A look at some candidates the Broncos would consider either with their No. 5 draft pick, or a few spots later in the first round:

Josh Allen, Quarterback, Wyoming

This would be my No. 1 pick because he has once-every-two-generation-type physical talent. Yes, he is probably the fifth or sixth best quarterback in this class right now. Accuracy and ability to process reads are concerning. He might not develop as I think he would.

But I'd show faith in his coaches and his ability to learn with that 37 Wonderlic score of his.

Sam Darnold, Quarterback, USC

Most view him as the most complete quarterback. Turnovers and an elongated release are a concern.

Doesn't turn 21 until June, which is a major plus, although there was thought he should have returned to play his redshirt junior season for the Trojans.

Baker Mayfield, Quarterback, Oklahoma

Case Keenum's honeymoon period in Denver would end the night of April 26 if, say, the Jets took Rosen at No. 3, leaving Mayfield for the Broncos at No. 5.

The Broncos will have dinner with Mayfield on Monday night, then visit with him at team headquarters Tuesday.

It will be their fourth significant, offseason meeting with the Heisman Trophy winner. They also spent several days with Mayfield at the Senior Bowl in late-January, had a 15-minute formal interview with him at the NFL Combine in early-March, and watched his Pro Day workout in Norman, Okla. In mid-March.

And the Broncos brass loved the playmaking skills he showed on tape before they got to know him.

Josh Rosen, Quarterback, UCLA

Considered the best pocket passer among the Big 4 draftable quarterbacks and therefore the most NFL-ready. He also has an edge to his personality the Broncos like. It's maybe not Mayfield's over-the-top edge, but Rosen has demonstrated a bite during his draft interview process.

Having him sit as a rookie, though, would be time wasted. If he's the only quarterback of the Big 4 remaining by the time the Broncos pick at No. 5, I wouldn't be surprised if they trade back with a team that is willing to move up to get Rosen.

Saquon Barkley, Running Back, Penn State

Ever since the value of running backs reached bottom in 2013 and 2014, when zero ball carriers were taken in the first round, there has been a run of franchise running backs taken high in the first round.

Todd Gurley in 2015. Ezekiel Elliott in 2016. Leonard Fournette and Christian McCaffrey in 2017.

Barkley in 2018.

The Browns haven't had a 1,000-yard rusher since Peyton Hillis in 2010. All projections have the Browns not bypassing their obvious need and taking Barkley with one of their top two picks.

But if somehow Barkley slipped to No. 5, the Broncos would have a difficult time passing him up – although they might because this is considered the deepest running back classes in years.

Quenton Nelson, Guard, Notre Dame

Sometimes, it takes courage to take the safe choice. John Elway has guts, but they're known to churn in a swashbuckling manner.

The Broncos agree with everyone else that Nelson is a once-every-decade guard. Problem is, guard is considered one of the game's less-valued positions. You'd like to pick a game-changer at No. 5 but as they say, sometimes the pursuit of greatness is the enemy of good. Something like that.

Denzel Ward, Cornerback, Ohio State

It's really not Bradley Roby who replaces Aqib Talib. It's Tramaine Brock.

Ward is considered the best pure corner in this draft as Alabama's Minkah Fitzpatrick is a tweener between corner and safety.

Corner is a more valued position than running back or guard. It's possible the No. 5 slot would be considered too rich for Ward, but the Broncos probably couldn't trade more than three or four spots back and expect to get him.

Roquan Smith, Linebacker, Georgia  
Tremaine Edmunds, Linebacker, Virginia Tech

The Broncos want a 3-4 inside linebacker within the first five rounds of this draft. Edmunds can run and could be an inside Will on first down, outside rusher on third down. This position would likely come into play if the Broncos trade back from No. 5.

Calvin Ridley, Wide Receiver, Alabama  
Courtland Sutton, Wide Receiver, SMU

I believe adding a young receiver to the Demaryius Thomas/Emmanuel Sanders mix is the Broncos' No. 1 need.

Problem is, this is not a strong, first-round class so a receiver would come into play only if the Broncos trade back.

Bradley Chubb, Defensive End/Linebacker, North Carolina State  
Minkah Fitzpatrick, Defensive Back, Alabama

The Broncos have taken enough Chubb-type players in the top two rounds in DeMarcus Walker and Shane Ray – although both players must come on in 2018. And with the addition of Su'a Cravens to a group that includes Darian Stewart, Justin Simmons and Will Parks, the Broncos are set at safety if that's what they view as Fitzpatrick's best position.

# Broncos looking for more than talent from potential 2018 draftees

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

April 13, 2018

His first might still be his best.

As in John Elway's first draft class as the Denver Broncos chief football decision-maker. It's a class that included a six-time (and counting) Pro Bowl selection in Von Miller and seven players who have started games for a team that has won five division titles and made two Super Bowl appearances.

It was 2011 and the Broncos took Miller at No. 2 overall and then found production and impact at almost every spot on the board with their nine-player class. This year, the Broncos once again have a top-five pick, and they need production and impact from as many picks as possible.

"We have to find the components to ... add to what we have and part of that is to go through the draft and have a good draft ... with guys who are Denver Broncos hopefully for a long time," Elway said.

With the benefit of hindsight, it's clear the 2011 draft class -- as well as the 2012 class, which included future starters DE Derek Wolfe, DE Malik Jackson and LB Danny Trevathan -- succeeded because the Broncos found players with the right blend of athleticism, football savvy and vocational character.

Miller, S Rahim Moore, OT Orlando Franklin, LB Nate Irving, S Quinton Carter, TE Julius Thomas and TE Virgil Green were among the Broncos' nine draft picks in 2011 who came to a team that had finished 4-12 the season before. Those seven players not only wanted to play, they pushed hard to get that playing time.

The Broncos' last two draft classes have been heavy on athleticism -- the height-weight-speed triangle of scouting -- but neither class has had many players move to the top of the depth chart. The disconnect between those newer players and the Broncos' more established veterans certainly played a role in last season's 5-11 finish.

Green, who signed with the Chargers last month as a free agent, used the word "entitled" and said as last season drew to a close "some of the young guys have potential, but they have to do more of the little things and just accept it's going to take work." Wolfe made a local radio appearance early in the offseason and added that rookies "every year get more and more entitled."

Of the players in the past two draft classes -- 16 combined -- safety Justin Simmons and left tackle Garett Bolles were the only full-time starters last season. Adam Gotsis was a rotational player on the defensive line. Although Bolles has flashed potential, multiple personnel executives in the league said in recent weeks that when they look at the Broncos' roster they would consider Simmons to be the only sure-fire hit from those two classes right now.

Those same executives added the caveat that time will tell -- the value of a draft class is often not fully seen for years -- something Broncos coach Vance Joseph echoed this offseason, especially when asked

about quarterback Paxton Lynch, whom the Broncos took in the first round in 2016. Even Miller had a bumpy ride at times during his first two seasons.

Miller was pulled from the lineup at times as a rookie for missing assignments, and he served a six-game suspension for violating the league's substance abuse policy in his second season. He says players such as DeMarcus Ware showed him "how much more there was than just being an athlete, running around out there."

Elway and Joseph have each used words like "culture" and "football character" when talking about what they're trying to add to the locker room with this year's draft class. The Broncos are still trying to recover from the leadership vacuum left behind after Peyton Manning and Ware retired and safety David Bruton Jr. signed with Washington in free agency.

All three were captains on the team that won Super Bowl 50.

"We know the issues that we had last year; let's go fix them" is how Joseph put it in recent weeks. "But we want to start with accountability on all fronts -- from all of us ... the bottom line is to have great culture, to have everyone doing their best every day and being team-first. That's having great culture. Very simple."

# Keep the No. 5 pick or trade down? With QB Case Keenum in place, Broncos have options

By Nicki Jhabvala

The Athletic

April 13, 2018

The Broncos have a veteran quarterback and a clear starter for 2018 in Case Keenum. They have arguably the league's finest pass rusher in Von Miller. They have a defense that ranked among the top five in passing, rushing and total yards allowed last season, and an offensive line that, while hardly perfect, improved in 2017.

And although they have numerous holes left to fill, the Broncos are positioned well to address the shortcomings.

But they have a dilemma. No longer do they have to draft a quarterback. No longer do they have to plug a gaping hole on the roster.

Instead, they have plenty of options with their No. 5 pick.

"Wide open," general manager John Elway said.

It's a luxury few teams have, to be able to draft the best player available. But it's also one that leaves the Broncos with a difficult decision that will affect their roster for years to come. After finishing last season 5-11 with a carousel of quarterbacks and no clear path to the future, the Broncos have to get this draft right.

So the prevailing thinking goes something like this:

The Broncos could select a quarterback and choose from a deep class with Josh Allen, Josh Rosen, Baker Mayfield or Sam Darnold among the top four in 2018. They've met with each at length during the offseason — at the Senior Bowl, the combine, at pro days, during private workouts and visits to their facility.

But there's no consensus No. 1 among them, so if the Broncos aren't in love with any — or if all four are gone by the time they pick — Denver could turn its attention to an immediate-impact player instead. Maybe running back Saquon Barkley from Penn State, if he's available, to give them an offensive compliment to Keenum. Maybe former North Carolina State pass rusher Bradley Chubb, a player who says he models his game after Miller. Or maybe the Broncos set their sights on former Notre Dame guard Quenton Nelson — if they feel comfortable splurging on a lineman.

"I think where their roster currently rests, they need to get an impact player right now," the NFL Network's Bucky Brooks said in a pre-draft conference call with reporters. "Their defense is coming back to the pack in terms of the level of dominance. Do you want to capitalize on that? If not, you want to spark that up. A pass rusher, another guy to go opposite Von Miller, cover corner, someone that can step right in for what Aqib Talib was doing. That would help that defense continue to maintain that high championship standard."

But there's another tempting option.

The Broncos could trade back in the first round, selling their No. 5 pick to a quarterback-needy team in exchange for a slew of picks. The question, of course, is whether it's worth it. Does it make sense to give up a top-five pick — where the success rate is higher, along with the price tag — to acquire multiple players later in the first and other rounds that could fill many needs?

And could they find a buyer? One obvious candidate is Buffalo, which is sitting on the No. 12 and No. 22 picks and is still in the market for a quarterback.

Though history isn't always a predictor of what's to come, the Broncos' past 15 years of dealing first-round selections offer some insight into what has worked, what hasn't and what could happen if Elway is open for business.

The Broncos have hardly been shy about making moves before or during the draft to land the player they want, but their success in doing so has varied.

Since 2003, the Broncos have made a total of 16 deals that have involved first-round picks. Six of those trades were made to acquire quarterbacks Jay Cutler (three trades to move up in 2006), Kyle Orton (2009), Tim Tebow (2010) and Paxton Lynch (2016). It's possible that only Lynch will be in the league when the 2018 season opens.

Denver traded out of the first round twice in that span. In 2005 it gave Washington its No. 25 pick in exchange for four other picks, two of which were used on future Pro Bowl receiver Brandon Marshall and cornerback Karl Paymah. And then in 2012, the Broncos made a pair of deals with New England and Tampa Bay to eventually land starting defensive end Derek Wolfe and safety/returner Omar Bolden.

In 2009, Josh McDaniels' first season in a tumultuous run as head coach, the Broncos oddly decided to give up a future first-round pick for a second-rounder. The following year, Denver moved back again in the first round and landed two starting receivers.

The majority of Denver's trades involving first-round picks have moved them up the draft. In 2006, they made three separate trades to leap from No. 29 to No. 11 and snag Cutler, who wore out his welcome after three seasons.

The next year, Denver traded up four spots and gave up three picks to get defensive end Jarvis Moss, who is regarded as one of the team's biggest draft busts.

In 2009, Denver traded Cutler to Chicago and received Kyle Orton and a first-round pick they used to select Robert Ayers, a defensive end who never really lived up to the expectations of a No. 18 pick. That year, they also traded a first-rounder — No. 14 in 2010 — to Seattle for a second-round pick that the Seahawks used on safety Earl Thomas.

In 2010, McDaniels' second and final year as head coach, the team traded four times to land quarterback Tim Tebow and receivers Eric Decker and Demaryius Thomas. Thomas and Decker led the Broncos in receiving for three consecutive seasons (2011-13) and Thomas, now the most-tenured Bronco on the roster, has scaled the franchise's record books.

Thomas enters his ninth season among the franchise's top three in career receptions, yards and touchdowns, and he has a team-record 35 100-yard games. Consider him the primary (only?) positive contribution from McDaniels.

Two years later, after trading away Tebow and signing Peyton Manning, the Broncos made a pair of moves to net Wolfe in the second round and safety/returner Bolden in the fourth. Wolfe is a starter on the Broncos' defensive line. Bolden owns the Broncos' record for the longest punt return for a touchdown (83 yards) but is no longer in the league.

Over the last three drafts, the Broncos have traded up twice. In 2015, they moved up five spots to get Shane Ray to eventually take over for DeMarcus Ware. Despite a limited 2017 season because of injury, Ray will return as the Broncos' starting linebacker opposite Miller.

And, finally, in 2016, Denver cut a deal with Seattle on the first day of the draft to get Lynch, a quarterback the team hoped would become the successor to Manning. Denver out-bid Dallas, who ended up taking Dak Prescott in the fourth. Lynch, meanwhile, has started four games over the last two years and is slated to be Keenum's backup in 2018 — unless Chad Kelly or a newcomer beats him out in camp.

The flurry of deals requires context, as each year differs in talent and the team's needs have varied wildly in the span. It was only five years ago that the Broncos owned the most prolific offense in history, and only three years ago that they were Super Bowl champs with a historically elite defense.

But 2018 is unusual in that they own a top-five pick for only the second time in the Pat Bowlen era (since 1984), and unusual in that anything is fair game for Denver.

Buckle up.

# For free agent Colin Kaepernick, principles trump tryout with Seahawks

By Dan Wolken

USA Today

April 13, 2018

No matter how systematically and powerfully the NFL has tried to tell its players to stick to sports, scared witless of jeopardizing its ability to profit off a fantasy, Colin Kaepernick and what he created by protesting the national anthem is bigger than any backup quarterback job when it comes with strings attached.

So while there's certainly going to be a segment of the public that uses Thursday's reported turn of events with Kaepernick and the Seahawks to wave their I-told-you-sos at the so-called Social Justice Warriors they despise so much, perhaps the real story here is that Kaepernick remains a man of exceptional principle.

Faced with a rare opportunity to potentially return to the league, Kaepernick refused to assure Seattle brass that he would stand for the national anthem this season, causing the team to postpone a scheduled workout.

Surely by now, Kaepernick knows what that means. Teams that needed a quarterback last season passed. He hasn't even had a tryout since he last played in 2016. The more time that passes since his last live snap, the less likely it is he'll ever get another one.

But at this point, any attempt to sign Kaepernick with the condition that his kneeling days are over feels like little more than a setup. Given his historical significance in the context of sports protests — and the fact he's built credibility that extends beyond the culture of football — going back now on the league's terms would do more harm than good.

The history of the NFL has given us lots of good quarterbacks, lots of bad ones and a whole bunch in between. But Kaepernick is a singular figure who transcends all of that, now the face of a particular moment in time where many African-American athletes who play sports at the highest level decided they had something to say about what's been happening in the real world.

In the end, whether you cheer the boldness to protest wrongdoing on such a risky stage or would rather roll your eyes and just watch people hit each other, Kaepernick stood for the greater good and took the more righteous path. That he's still taking it today, even when there's now seemingly direct evidence that it's costing him a chance to play, proves once and for all that he's anything but a phony or an opportunist.

Whether you like what Kaepernick stands for or not, he continues to be authentic while the NFL continues to pretend the world outside its 31 stadiums doesn't exist.

# Dolphins cheerleader says she faced discrimination after revealing her virginity

By Adam Kilgore  
Washington Post  
April 13, 2018

In April 2016, Kristan Ann Ware felt excited as she walked into an annual work review. As a Miami Dolphins cheerleader, Ware had to re-apply for her job every season, but as a performer entering her third year, she only looked forward to a new role and the chance, as a veteran, to give younger teammates guidance.

Ware soon realized her interview would not go as she expected. Shortly after it began, according to a complaint Ware filed Wednesday with the Florida Commission on Human Relations, one of her coaches tapped on a stack of papers and said, "Let's talk about your virginity."

By the time she left the office, Ware had been told by two coaches she could no longer discuss her personal vow to forego sex before marriage, and she had been photographed in a bikini while trying not to cry.

"It was like a bus hit me," Ware said. "I was completely speechless. All that formed on my face were tears."

Ware lasted one more season as a Dolphins cheerleader, a year she alleges brought her emotional and physical distress. Now, Ware is filing a complaint against the Dolphins and the NFL with a state labor board. In the complaint, Ware alleges she faced hostility and retaliation from Dolphins cheerleading coaches and was discriminated against on behalf of her gender and religion. She and her lawyer say the NFL could do more to protect cheerleaders, but instead has ignored them.

"The NFL and all NFL member clubs support fair employment practices," NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said. "Everyone who works in the NFL, including cheerleaders, has the right to work in a positive and respectful environment that is free from any and all forms of harassment and discrimination and fully complies with state and federal laws. Our office will work with our clubs in sharing best practices and employment-related processes that will support club cheerleading squads within an appropriate and supportive workplace.

The Dolphins have not responded to a request to comment.

The legal action adds to the growing public disillusionment with workplace conditions among NFL cheerleaders. This week, the New York Times quoted several former cheerleaders, both with attribution and anonymously, who said they faced harassment as NFL cheerleaders, including a former Redskins cheerleader who said the team sold an appearance where cheerleaders showed up at a residence to do nothing but hang out with men drinking beer and watching football.

Last month, former New Orleans Saints cheerleader Bailey Davis filed an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint claiming the Saints discriminated against her on the basis of gender when they

fired her over an Instagram post and rumors she had been at the same party as a player. Sara Blackwell, the Florida lawyer representing Davis, is also representing Ware.

“If it wasn’t for Bailey speaking out, I would have never been able to find Sara,” Ware said. “If it wasn’t for God healing me and using my pain for his purpose, I would have never been courageous enough to tell my story. Right now is the perfect time to tell my story.”

It began during a bus trip in London in fall 2015, when the Dolphins were overseas to play the New York Jets. Several cheerleaders discussed which songs they listened to during sex — “girl talk,” is how Ware described it. When pressed for hers, Ware eventually explained she didn’t have one, because she intended to remain a virgin until marriage because of her religious beliefs.

Between the bus conversation and the April interview, coaches discovered this information. In the complaint, Ware alleges Dorie Grogan, the team director, questioned her about how the team had come to know. According to the complaint, as Ware explained that she shared the personal information only when asked, Grogan interrupted her and said, “As far as we are concerned, you have taken something that was once upon a time pure and beautiful and you’ve made it dirty.”

According to the complaint, Brooke Nix, the team choreographer, looked at Ware and said, “I think it is still beautiful, but you need to stop talking about it.”

According to the complaint, Grogan repeated that Ware could talk about her virginity in private, but never around the team, then added that Ware needed to become a woman.

As part of the interview, the complaint states, another coach told Ware to put on a bikini and heels — Ware later said the coaches wanted to see if she was “calendar ready.” Holding back tears, according to the complaint, she changed, came back into the room nearly naked and posed for photos.

“After being exposed, and having my virginity [cast] in a negative way, I felt so vulnerable,” Ware said in a phone interview. “It kind of crushed my spirit to change into a bikini after that comment was made. It took a piece of me.”

Before the meeting with coaches, Ware said, teammates had sometimes asked her why the hard-driving Grogan had treated her so nicely. Afterward, according to the complaint, Grogan’s behavior toward Ware grew aggressive. During a photo shoot in which Ware wore a bikini and clutched fruit, Grogan told her to play with the fruit “like they were balls” and to “make love to the camera.” Ware believed Grogan was mocking her.

During a run through for a fashion show, the complaint alleges, Ware wore a bathing suit in a manner Grogan didn’t like. Grogan yanked on the straps of the suit until red marks appeared on Ware’s skin, according to the complaint.

In the fall of 2016, Ware alerted a Dolphins’ human resources representative, the complaint states. While the representative was understanding, Ware said the abusive treatment from coaches continued.

“There is a sense of manipulation, where any time you raised a concern, it was like, ‘All we need is a pretty girl to wear the uniform. You’re completely replaceable, so if you have a problem with it, leave. One hundred other girls want your spot,’ ” Ware said. “I want to make a positive difference where these

girls can have their dreams come true without compromising who they are. The silence needs to end. The intimidation needs to end.”

The complaint alleges Ware was discriminated on the basis of gender, arguing both cheerleaders and football players represent the Dolphins, but players were not reprimanded or censored when using religious language, and therefore male and female employees were held to different standards.

When Ware wrote a blog post for the Dolphins website, all mentions of her faith were removed except a general reference to God, according to the complaint. The Dolphins cheerleading team’s main Instagram account did not tag or promote her Instagram posts when she mentioned religion, according to the complaint. The complaint cites players expressing religious views on social media that were not stifled and that the Dolphins had a team chaplain as examples of how players were treated differently.

Blackwell said she included the league in the complaint because she believes it has the most power in how cheerleaders should be treated moving forward.

“What we all really want is for the NFL to pay attention,” Blackwell said. “We want them to have us over and say, ‘Where are we going wrong, and how can we fix it?’ As an employment lawyer, it wouldn’t cost them a penny to make this a successful and wonderful program, where people could be proud and not be harassed and not be discriminated against.”

# 2018 NFL Mock Draft: Six quarterbacks taken in first round, including one for the Patriots

By Jared Dubin  
CBSSports.com  
April 13, 2018

No preamble necessary for my latest mock draft. Let's get right into things, which are going to get crazy as teams move around the board in order to snatch their quarterback of the future in the 2018 NFL Draft.

## 1. Cleveland Browns

Sam Darnold, QB, USC. A recent NFL Network poll revealed that 17 of 24 GMs asked the question consider Darnold the top quarterback in this class. Sure, the Browns might be one of the two teams that picked Josh Allen. But for now, with public opinion seemingly split on who the Browns will actually take, it feels safer to play the odds -- especially since I've had Darnold in this spot throughout the process.

## 2. Denver Broncos (via mock trade from NYG)

Josh Rosen, QB, UCLA. With Darnold off the board, the Giants elect to trade down. But it's not the Bills moving up to No. 2; it's the Broncos, who decide they don't want three teams taking a passer before they do. John Elway moves up and gets his QB of the future.

## 3. New York Jets (from IND)

Baker Mayfield, QB, Oklahoma. The Jets stick at No. 3 and get Mayfield, who has the best overall tape of any quarterback in the class but gets dinged for being short and daring to have a personality that isn't incredibly boring. Something tells me the New York tabloids will love this guy.

## 4. Cleveland Browns (from HOU)

Bradley Chubb, DE, NC State. Cleveland gets its QB of the future and pairs the top defender in this class with last year's No. 1 overall pick, Myles Garrett, to form a potentially electric pass rush.

## 5. New York Giants (via mock trade from DEN)

Quenton Nelson, G, Notre Dame. The Giants move down three spots, picking up the No. 40 and 106 picks in the process. They also get the player they probably would have taken at No. 2 in the first place, solidifying the weakest area of their team with a dominant offensive lineman.

## 6. Indianapolis Colts (from NYJ)

Saquon Barkley, RB, Penn State. The Chubb pipe dream ended when the Browns snatched him up at No. 4 but the Colts will happily settle for giving Andrew Luck (if healthy ... please be healthy) an elite partner in the backfield for the first time in his career. Worst-case scenario, Barkley serves as the foundation of a Luck-less offense.

## 7. Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Derwin James, S, Florida State. The Buccaneers had a dreadful pass defense last season, and James can be a nice salve for the back end. He makes plays all over the field and he tested out as a high-level

athlete at the combine. If Nelson is off the board, as he is here, James would be the best selection for Tampa.

8. Buffalo Bills (via mock trade from CHI)

Josh Allen, QB, Wyoming. Buffalo finally moves up for a quarterback, jumping a few spots ahead of division rival Miami to land the last of the top four QB prospects.

9. San Francisco 49ers

Minkah Fitzpatrick, DB, Alabama. Our editor R.J. White said it best when assigning the Niners this same pick in his Thursday mock: "The 49ers still need help in the secondary after adding Richard Sherman, who is coming off a major injury himself. Enter Fitzpatrick, who could slide in at slot corner with Sherman and Ahkello Witherspoon on the boundaries, or at free safety if San Francisco decides it wants to move Jimmie Ward to corner. Either way, the Alabama product is a talent you want on your defense."

10. Oakland Raiders

Roquan Smith, LB, Georgia. Jon Gruden has professed a desire to bring football back to 1998. Drafting a linebacker this high would certainly help accomplish that goal, but Smith is the kind of player that might actually be worth it.

11. Miami Dolphins

Vita Vea, DL, Washington. The Dolphins cast Ndamukong Suh aside for salary reasons this offseason, and drafting Vea will help them plug the Suh-sized hole in the middle of their run defense.

12. Chicago Bears (from CIN, via mock trade from BUF)

Tremaine Edmunds, LB, Virginia Tech. The Bears get picks No. 12 and 22 from the Bills in exchange for No. 8 and 39, and they get the player their defense needs anyway. Edmunds can play all over, and fits right in with the young core of players Chicago has on defense.

13. Washington Redskins

Da'Ron Payne, DL, Alabama. Washington would probably prefer Vea, who is a slightly better run defender, but Payne will do in a pinch.

14. Green Bay Packers

Denzel Ward, CB, Ohio State. Ward helps the Packers remake their defensive backfield. He can step right in and play on the boundary right away with his athleticism and physicality; and he should be a long-term answer, unlike some of the recent defensive back draft picks Green Bay has made.

15. Arizona Cardinals

Lamar Jackson, QB, Louisville. Arizona resists the urge to move up the board and still gets an intriguing quarterback prospect. It will take a creative offensive mind to unlock Jackson's full potential, but if somebody taps into it, he could have a higher upside than any other QB in the draft.

16. Baltimore Ravens

Calvin Ridley, WR, Alabama. The Ravens did sign Michael Crabtree and John Brown this offseason, but their receiver room could use an injection of talent that will last beyond the next couple years and is reliable enough to stay on the field. Ridley didn't test well at the combine but he has excellent movement skills and great hands. In the right scheme, he should be able to get open very easily.

17. Los Angeles Chargers

Leighton Vander Esch, LB, Boise State. The Chargers already have a ton of talent and athleticism on defense, and Vander Esch would fit right in. Imagining him on the same defense as Melvin Ingram, Joey Bosa, and one of the best secondaries in the AFC almost seems unfair.

#### 18. Seattle Seahawks

Will Hernandez, G, UTEP. If the Seahawks can't move down for more picks, expect them to finally give Russell Wilson some help up front.

#### 19. Dallas Cowboys

D.J. Moore, WR, Maryland. Yes, the Cowboys have a crowded wide receiver room after signing Allen Hurns and Deonte Thompson. Yes, they still have Dez Bryant and Terrance Williams and Cole Beasley and Ryan Switzer. But they don't have an athletic playmaker like Moore, who should be able to help them beyond whenever the tenures of Bryant, Williams, and Beasley end, which could be sooner than we think. He can create those wide throwing windows Dak Prescott needs to recapture his rookie year success.

#### 20. Detroit Lions

Marcus Davenport, DL, UTSA. The Lions need someone to help Ezekiel Ansah rush the passer. Davenport has a twitchy motor and is the kind of high-upside player they can mold into a long-term partner for Ansah on the defensive front.

#### 21. Cincinnati Bengals (from BUF)

James Daniels, G/C, Iowa. The Bengals took a step toward addressing their offensive line woes by acquiring left tackle Cordy Glenn from the Bills and moving down to this pick. They can get help on the interior of the line by nabbing Daniels here.

#### 22. Chicago Bears (from KC via mock trade from BUF)

Isaiah Wynn, OG, Georgia. The Bears make out really well in their deal with the Bills, picking up a versatile defender and some help on the interior of their offensive line. Mitchell Trubisky will appreciate having Wynn on the line in front of him.

#### 23. New England Patriots (from LAR)

Mason Rudolph, QB, Oklahoma State. The Patriots land Tom Brady's next quarterback apprentice.

#### 24. Carolina Panthers

Courtland Sutton, WR, SMU. The Panthers have some intriguing offensive pieces but they still need a reliable speed threat on the outside. Torrey Smith might be able to help some, but he's not a long-term piece and whatever upside he once had is no longer as intriguing. Sutton has a great frame and top-notch athleticism, and would make for a nice fit alongside Devin Funchess, Christian McCaffrey, and Curtis Samuel in the Panthers' passing game.

#### 25. Tennessee Titans

Harold Landry, EDGE, Boston College. The Titans have made some nice upgrades on defense this offseason, including adding a cornerback in Malcolm Butler. Adding a pass-rusher will further upgrade their pass defense. Landry had elite production and athletic traits at BC, even while struggling with injuries last season.

#### 26. Atlanta Falcons

Taven Bryan, DT, Florida. The Falcons love nothing more than taking plus athletes on defense in the first round. Bryan fits that mold nicely, and would also be a fantastically helpful player for the current iteration of their defense.

27. Cleveland Browns (via mock trade from NO)

Maurice Hurst, DL, Michigan. The Saints move out of the first round here, picking up extra selections from the Browns, who come away as big winners of the first round. A defensive line with Garrett, Chubb, and Hurst on it would immediately be unfair.

28. Pittsburgh Steelers

Rashaan Evans, LB, Alabama. Pittsburgh is going to miss Ryan Shazier this season, and possibly beyond. Evans can help them in both the short and long-term, whether Shazier ever returns to the field or not.

29. Jacksonville Jaguars

Christian Kirk, WR, Texas A&M. After losing Allen Robinson and Hurns this offseason, the Jags need to get Marqise Lee some help. Kirk landing in the first round is somewhat of a surprise but he has the talent to be the best receiver in the class if everything works out for him.

30. Minnesota Vikings

Kolton Miller, OT, UCLA. It's difficult to think of a better pick in this spot for the Vikings.

31. New England Patriots

Jaire Alexander, CB, Louisville. The Pats lost Malcolm Butler this offseason and even though pass rusher might be a bigger "need," they've never really operated with the idea that they need a dominant edge guy. Instead, they shore up the back end of the defense by taking a corner that fits all their criteria.

32. Philadelphia Eagles

Isaiah Oliver, CB, Colorado. The defending champs land a strong corner to replace the departed Patrick Robinson.

# NFL Draft Rumors Start in Cleveland, Where No. 1 Overall Pick is No Sure Thing

By Albert Breer

MMQB.com

April 13, 2018

Today's an important day for the Browns. Wyoming's Josh Allen is in Berea, Ohio, the final of the draft's Big Four quarterbacks to visit the team facility and make his case to be the No. 1 overall pick in 14 days.

And rumblings growing louder in scouting circles have led many to believe that Allen will walk through those doors with a lead.

My understanding, and I've heard this from multiple people: Cleveland has not made a final call. The team's scouts returned from the road on Tuesday, started draft meetings on Wednesday, and there's still discussion to be had. One person who knows GM John Dorsey well explained it like this: "I know John likes [Sam] Darnold, and I know he likes Allen's talent. It'll come down to this: Who do they trust most?"

Darnold's edge might be there. From declaring he wanted to go to Cleveland, to the stories of his teammates showing up in the rain for his pro day, to flying back to Los Angeles to throw for USC tailback Ronald Jones at the Trojans' second pro day, just about everything about Darnold screams franchise quarterback. It's the kind of force of nature that a cultural sea change could be centered on.

But is the tide turning?

The Jets, picking third, had nothing on the books with Darnold as of April 1. That's changed. He's set for a visit with them now—one of two he'll make in Jersey, with the Giants (picking second) on the docket for next week. Darnold also has plans to work out for the Bills, a prime candidate to deal up from 12th, in Los Angeles on Friday.

At the very least, all three are preparing for the chance that Darnold is on the board after the first pick, as they should be. So where two weeks ago this race was thought to be over, now these teams are proceeding as if it's back on. And while there's support for both Darnold and Allen among the Browns staff, I've heard they aren't the only two QBs Dorsey plans to discuss during the meetings for the No. 1 overall spot.

With two weeks to go, there's a lot on the line for everyone involved. So this week's Game Plan will be heavy on the draft. We'll dive a little deeper into the big question facing Allen; get to know the lesser-known Allen (who used to be a big deal) whom Josh Allen is working out with; look at comments made by Patriots owner Robert Kraft this week and what we can read into them; and explain the significance of Odell Beckham being present and accounted for this week.

But we start with what I think you want to hear, and those are the rumblings buzzing through the draft rumor mill. It starts with the intrigue with that first overall pick. And it'll keep going through a first round that's deficient in talent compared to 2016 and '17, yet rich with possibilities for trades, runs on positions and surprises.

Let's talk about some ...

- The Broncos could be moving ... down. It's been out there that the Colts would consider a second move down the board from No. 6 (after trading out of No. 3, to the Jets, in March), but they may have competition among sellers. I've heard if Denver doesn't like the quarterback that's there at 5, whoever that is, then it'll actively look at trying to get more picks. Two names that have been connected to the Broncos of late—Notre Dame G Quenton Nelson and Ohio State CB Denzel Ward—could be available further down the line. For what it's worth, the same two names have been connected to the Bears at No. 8.
- Late first-round picks lack value. The other day I was spitballing on a potential Bills-Giants swap with a team exec, who said to me, "The problem is that the 22nd pick might as well be in the third round." He was exaggerating, but only a little bit. The consensus I've heard is the difference between 22 and 52 is minimal this year, which is part of why the Colts did well to land a couple high second-rounders in their trade with the Jets.
- The mystery of Lamar Jackson. The 2016 Heisman Trophy winner is in play to go in the first round—or he could be waiting well into Friday night. I'm keeping my eye on the Ravens here. They'll have Jackson in their facility next week, on the second-to-last day that in-house visits are allowed, and they have an offensive staff with the infrastructure to build for Jackson. Coordinator Marty Mornhinweg built an offense for Mike Vick in Philly. And senior assistant Greg Roman put in option packages for Colin Kaepernick in San Francisco. So Jackson could be an interesting fit. Remember, Joe Flacco has underperformed of late, is 33 and has a balky back and no guaranteed money left on his deal.
- The linebackers are rising. I believe that if Bradley Chubb is gone by No. 6 and Indy sticks there, Georgia's Roquan Smith and Virginia Tech's Tremaine Edmunds would be in play. And I think each would be a consideration for San Francisco at 9, Oakland at 10, Miami at 11 and Buffalo at 12, if those teams don't move. And if Smith and Edmunds go earlier than expected, that would stand to help Alabama's Rashaan Evans and Boise State's Leighton Vander Esch.
- Will the Dolphins take a quarterback? As you read this, Baker Mayfield will be wrapping up his visit in Miami, with Allen coming in later Thursday. Ryan Tannehill is a little younger than Flacco (he turns 30 in July) but enters 2018 in a similar spot—coming off an injury-affected season with no guaranteed money left on his deal. The problem for Miami is that to get one of the top four QBs, it may need to move up, so we'll see if the rumors of Adam Gase being that smitten with Mayfield are true.
- What the Giants do will dictate a lot. I've heard that Giants GM Dave Gettleman really likes Darnold. I've heard the coaches like Allen. I've heard everyone there likes Penn State running back Saquon Barkley. And I know Gettleman has no history of trading down. But rumors of the work the team has done on University of Texas-San Antonio pass-rusher Marcus Davenport indicate that they're at least considering it here. Bottom line, what the Giants do will help paint the picture for the rest of the top 10. If they take a quarterback, then that would mean QBs go 1-2-3 and could create a feeding frenzy for Cleveland's pick at 4. If someone else trades up, then another team comes off the market for one. And if the Giants take Barkley, one of the QBs could slide a little. Gettleman is holding the cards.
- A good draft for grunt positions. You like interior offensive linemen? How about nose tackles? Nickel corners? Then this is the draft for you. We told you a couple months ago that Barkley and Nelson would

likely be the top two prospects in the class—and that a back and a guard being rated that high would cause positional value debates all over the Top 10. Well, those could continue on down the line with really good tailbacks and guard/centers, and inside corners and big bodies for the defensive line available late in the first round and into Round 2.

#### FIRST AND 10

1. Patriots QB Tom Brady is off to Qatar on Thursday to do work for his charity, Best Buddies. I'm told the plan is for him to head back to the states late on Monday—and I'm sure no one will freak out if he's not at the start of the Patriots' offseason program that morning because of it. Right?
2. It'll be interesting to see which deal gets done first—one for Rams DT Aaron Donald or Raiders DE Khalil Mack. Both are expected to get past Ndamukong Suh's non-QB record of just under \$19.1 million per. The question is who tops whom, something those in the agent community are watching since Donald is repped by CAA and Mack by fellow titan Lagardere. "The agents are in an arm's race," said another prominent agent. "And they're backed by two of the biggest companies in sports entertainment, so money isn't relevant to them. Looking like they won is." The two direct agents, by the way, are Todd France (Donald) and Joel Segal (Mack), both of whom have pretty impressive client lists.
3. Part of the issue for Mack may be the Raiders' willingness to hand over a big number in fully guaranteed money, since they aren't as cash-rich as some other franchises and those dollars have to be fully funded. Suh's 2015 deal still has the highest full guarantee for a defensive player in NFL history, at just under \$60 million. Denver's Von Miller is second at \$44 million.
4. Patience can pay off in free agency. On Day 1, the Bears paid \$14 million per for Allen Robinson. On Day 29, the Saints paid \$4.8 million per to sign restricted free agent Cam Meredith away from the Bears. Both wideouts are coming off torn ACLs, and Robinson has a higher ceiling, to be sure. But in 2016, Meredith had seven fewer catches (73 to 66), two fewer touchdowns (6 to 4) and five more yards (888 to 883) than Robinson.
5. Seattle's turning over cornerstones on its defense, and so here's one name to keep an eye on: corner Justin Coleman. The Seahawks traded a seventh-round pick to get him back from New England last September and put a second-round tender (which he has since signed, at \$2.9 million for 2018) on him after he finished 2017 strong. He's viewed as a nice piece for a team that needs a few now.
6. I'd be at least a little concerned that we're still talking about Cardinals QB Sam Bradford's ability to step onto a practice field in May. By then it will have been eight months since he suffered his latest knee injury. Related: It'll be interesting to see how aggressive Arizona is in a couple weeks in trying to move up for a younger quarterback.
7. Not ideal, either, if Andrew Luck can't throw "The Duke" in a few weeks when the Colts open OTAs. But I'd say, in this case, Indy is right to be as cautious as it possibly can be in bringing back Luck.
8. To anyone who knows the coaches and players who've been around Richie Incognito, Shady McCoy's social-media pleas for the Pro Bowl guard to come back to the Bills come as no surprise. Even in the thick of the Bullygate controversy, Dolphins staff and teammates privately supported Incognito. It was unanimous among those I talked to. He was absolutely one of the most well-liked guys in every locker room I saw him in, which would surprise some people.

9. Seeing Mike Vrabel discuss his first offseason program the other day in Tennessee showed what he brings to the table as a former player. He's putting it on those guys to make sure they're ready and trying to establish a level of trust along the way. "If they're pros," he said, "they're going to be working somewhere." Vrabel, you might remember, was part of the NFLPA executive committee that negotiated the current work rules back in 2011.

10. Was everyone as excited about the preseason schedule coming out as me?

#### FOUR DOWNS

1. Don't minimize the symbolism of Beckham showing up. We'll see what the Giants do, but I know the way at least a few other teams are taking Odell Beckham's presence in Jersey this week as a tacit removal of the star receiver from the NFL trade block. My feeling was April 9 was always the key date. That was Monday, and Beckham reported. He then came back for work Tuesday, and I'm told he was there again Wednesday. What he did—normal offseason strength and conditioning work—was something he could've done anywhere. But that he went through it with his teammates and down the hall from Gettleman and new coach Pat Shurmur matters. Had Beckham decided to stay away, it'd have been borderline impossible for the team to do a long-term deal with him at the rate he's seeking.

Just think about all that's happened in the past 16 months. The boat trip. The no-show in the Packers playoff game. The hole punched in the wall at Lambeau. The de facto holdout last spring, complete with Beckham waving his absence in everyone's face, via social media. The dog-peeing celebration, which was a precursor to other explosions in the Giants locker room. And then whatever happened in Paris a couple months back. If the Giants were to do a deal with Beckham without the receiver having done anything in Shurmur's new program, they'd be implicitly signing off on everything that happened before the new regime arrived. So Beckham absolutely did the right thing, both for himself, and the team. By showing up, he gave himself the chance to put a few pelts on the wall, and show his teammates and the bosses that he's on board with the new coaches. And by getting good work in now, the Giants doing a deal with him in the coming months would take on a different context within the locker room.

This was an opportunity for Beckham to turn the page. It was wise of him to take it.

2. Josh Allen's rise. It's not hard to see why teams are tempted by him. He's big and strong and athletic, and can put the ball pretty much anywhere he wants it on the field, which was illustrated in living color at his pro day. But the problems are just as obvious. His college career is as perplexing as it is intriguing. Even taking into account the exodus of talent from Laramie after 2016, Allen didn't take the steps scouts were hoping he would as a redshirt junior, and as such questions arose about his football intelligence. I'd heard those in the fall, and they were the first thing I thought of when I asked Wyoming coach Craig Bohl, who recruited Carson Wentz to North Dakota State, to compare the two prodigious talents.

"If I had a quarter for every time that question was asked, I'd be a rich guy," Bohl said a few months back, over the phone. "The physical size is very similar. They're both tall, strong guys that can run well, they're ultra competitive guys, they have strong arms, and they're both guys that are students of the game. There are a lot more similarities to them than there are differences. ... I think Josh, last year, and even this year, he improvises a little bit more than I saw Carson do when we had Carson. Carson, at that time, was a little bit more programmed, he was set and would go through every one of his progressions, where Josh might improvise more. They're not drastically different, but they're a little bit different."

It matches what you heard from scouts gathering info on the quarterback—Wentz was a savant coming out, and Allen isn't one. And so if you want to know how his stock has risen (I've heard the Browns, Giants and Bills have all been impressed), it makes sense that part of it would be allaying those concerns—which he's done by doing well when teams put him on the board. Scoring a 37 on the Wonderlic doesn't hurt either, though he was prepared for it. "Everyone has the test now," an AFC GM said the other night. "So you take it with a grain of salt. With Allen, I really think it comes down to bringing him in, putting him on the board, and testing him as much as you can to see what the comfort level is with him. How fast can he process and play? Allen's talented, but those would be the things you'd need to know."

And evidently, Allen has sold some people not necessarily on what he is, but on what he could be with a few years of NFL coaching.

3. Quarterback contracts will be interesting. Given the offseason of change Green Bay is going through, it was at least interesting reading the comments made by Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers when he was asked about it this week on Milwaukee radio: "I think it's pretty clear that players play and coaches coach and personnel people make their decisions. That's the way they want it." Rodgers' most trusted target over his decade as Green Bay starter, Jordy Nelson, was asked to take a pay cut, then released in March. And that was after the team let quarterbacks coach Alex Van Pelt go, a move that Rodgers publicly expressed frustration over.

Will all of this affect Rodgers' play? My guess is that it won't. He's too competitive, and was playing too well before he got hurt last year. He still has a solid offensive group around him that'll be adding Jimmy Graham to the mix. But I do think all of this could affect how he approaches his contract situation, with so many in Green Bay having assumed that this would be when the Packers would re-do his deal. There have been rumblings about Rodgers feeling underpaid in the past, and his comments project a player with a greater understanding of how coldly a team can do business—and maybe the need for players to handle their own business the same way.

So does Rodgers ask for what Kirk Cousins got: A short-term, fully-guaranteed deal? Could the Packers even afford to do it, based on the funding rule? And what if Matt Ryan gets structure in Atlanta similar to what Cousins gets in Minnesota? Add it up, and my feeling is this negotiation may not be as simple as many thought it would be.

4. Where the Patriots are. Patriots owner Robert Kraft spoke to beat man Jeff Howe, now with The Athletic, for a story that ran this week, and what was most interesting to me was how he independently brought up his quarterback's age. Asked about Tom Brady's contract situation, the boss responded like this: "He'll be 41 when the season starts. Neither side has an issue with it. If it becomes an issue, we'll deal with it." Everyone knows Brady's into his 40s now. Why bring up the number?

The end of Brady's documentary was notable in that it: a) hinted at his dissatisfaction with the atmosphere in Foxboro and b) raised the possibility, for the first time, that Brady wants to take things year-to-year rather than shooting to keep playing until he's some far-off age. And so here's my interpretation: Whether he's making an educated guess or knows the date, Kraft can see the end of the Brady/Belichick Era and is preparing for it. Why wouldn't the contract be a big deal? It wouldn't be one if it wasn't such a sure thing that the player will continue past 2019, the final year of Brady's current deal.

Multiple people close to the situation told me that Kraft was the driving force in keeping Josh McDaniels in Foxboro. Belichick and team president Jonathan Kraft popped their heads in on that Tuesday, but my understanding is the owner was the one who made sure McDaniels wasn't going anywhere. And he had good reason. When he looked at his team after Super Bowl LII, he saw a coach who'd be 66 and a quarterback who'd be 41 the next time the Patriots took the field. With that came a recognition that the Patriots were starting to look like the kind of year-to-year operation that Kraft loathed to run. It was at the root of the 1997 Bill Parcells divorce. And so he moved to create some stability, and was able to convince McDaniels to stay.

To me, Kraft's comments to Howe are an extension of that. And there's more work to be done in that regard. Which isn't to say Brady's deal isn't a priority. It's just not on the front burner right now.

#### LESSON OF THE WEEK

Josh Allen and Sam Darnold spent about two months training, throwing and living together in preparation for the April 26 draft. And here's a pretty amazing fact – If you rewind three or four years, the other guy in the threesome working with QB guru Jordan Palmer would've been considered far more likely to make it here.

You may not know who Kyle Allen is. But he used to be a pretty big deal.

Allen was ranked the top high school quarterback prospect in America in 2014 by Rivals, Scout and ESPN. By October of that year, he'd wrested the starting job at Texas A&M from Kenny Hill. Allen had the size, athleticism and arm to make NFL types drool.

Then, it all came undone. A&M brought in another touted QB recruit in 2015, Allen had a tumultuous sophomore year, transferred to Houston, then was benched by the Cougars' new coaching staff. So he decided to declare for this year's draft, even though 14 of his 17 collegiate starts happened more than two seasons ago. And so he knew what questions were coming—and they have come.

"That's usually the main question," Kyle Allen said Tuesday afternoon, after wrapping up a private workout with the Seahawks. "Teams just want me to walk them through what went on in college, and everything that happened between high school and then. It is a mystery to some teams that don't know a lot of the details. That's probably what we've talked about most."

So maybe the questions get a little old for Allen, but he knows well the flip side of the equation. The lofty status he held as an 18-year-old is a piece of the puzzle, and not an insignificant one, in why so many teams are interested in him. And that's where we have this week's lesson.

You'll hear a lot this time of year that guys never live down where they're drafted. And Allen's just one example that guys also, for better or worse, don't live down how they're recruited either.

Consider that 2014 class. The No. 1 player, Da'Shawn Hand, will likely be a Day 2 pick despite only starting one season at Alabama. The next three guys on the Rivals list (Myles Garrett, Jabrill Peppers, Leonard Fournette) were first-rounders last year. No. 5 Quin Blanding will likely go in the middle rounds this year. Sixth is Adoree' Jackson, another 2017 first-rounder. Seventh is Allen.

And Allen's getting plenty of attention. He worked out for the Seahawks on Tuesday, and flew to Seattle for an in-house visit with the team Wednesday. He's also had a private workout with the Titans, with

Mike Vrabel in attendance; met with the Lions and Panthers; and threw at local pro days for the Cardinals and Texans.

So how's he answering the big questions?

- On what happened at A&M: "There was some miscommunication between people there. What it came down to for me, my goal has always been to make it to the NFL. And the way I look at my goals, I try to align everything that I'm doing every day, situations that I'm in, with my goals. And so at A&M, when I sat back after that sophomore season, and thought about how things were going towards my goals, it just didn't seem like that was the right fit for me at that time with how he was playing us at quarterback, and where he was trying to go with it. I didn't really understand or know where he was trying to go with the offense. ... (Kyler Murray) would go in, I'd come out. They'd put him in if I was struggling. And then if he struggled, I'd go in. It was a volatile situation from a quarterback's perspective."
- On declaring for the draft: "It was similar to the A&M situation. I had two options basically, because the way it was going at Houston, it didn't seem like they wanted to go in a direction where I was the best fit at quarterback. They took me out after the third game, and from there I was just preparing our quarterbacks. For me, it was a roll of the dice. If I go to college somewhere else, transfer again, that's a roll of the dice, I gotta win that job and win over that locker room and who knows what's going to happen there? And if I go to the league, it's a roll of the dice, if a team wants to bet on me and think I can come in and be a two or be a three my first couple years and help the team. Either way, it's a roll of the dice. I was ready to bet on myself and come out here and try and impress some teams and force my way into the league."
- On what he'd do different: "I think the only thing I'd have done differently is change how I prepared as a freshman. That was the biggest downfall—I didn't know what it meant to prepare for a game in college, I didn't know what it meant to be ready to play in college football until probably into my sophomore year. And even then my routine, my preparation wasn't perfected. ... I grew up in Arizona playing high school football, where I stepped out on the field on Friday nights and threw the ball around, threw for touchdowns and a bunch of yards. And then you get to college, and I didn't go to a college where there was a guy playing in front of me, because I wanted to play early, so I'm in a straight competition and learning the preparation on my own, learning the routine on my own. There were growing pains."

I talked to one coach who's evaluated Allen, who put it like this: "He's got talent, and the tape isn't bad. There's just not a lot of it, and it's obviously not great that he was benched." And the explanation, of course, isn't horrible either. Allen and Murray (who'll start at Oklahoma in the fall) both left A&M because of the communication issue, and Tom Herman's decision to leave Houston happened before Allen could even take a snap in a game for the coach he went to play for.

At the very least, who Allen was before all of the drama has piqued the NFL's curiosity. And where this goes from here will be pretty interesting.

# **Report: Reuben Foster not eligible for exempt list yet, can participate in team workouts for now**

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

April 13, 2018

Reuben Foster's spot on the 49ers' roster is "under great scrutiny," but San Francisco cannot use the commissioner's exempt list for the linebacker.

Jim Trotter of NFL Media reports that Foster will not become a candidate for the list until the league concludes its investigation of domestic violence allegations. That means Foster can attend the start of team workouts Monday.

It remains unclear whether he will show up.

The Santa Clara District Attorney charged Foster with felony domestic violence related to a February incident that left his girlfriend with a ruptured eardrum. His new teammate, Richard Sherman, appeared in court Thursday during Foster's arraignment.

The 49ers were not surprised as Sherman told management after he signed that he was interested in taking Foster under his wing, per Trotter. Safety Jaquiski Tartt joined Sherman in the courtroom, Matt Barrows of the Sacramento Bee reports.