

The NFL on REO: The Draft

An Exhaustively Researched Hypothesis

The NFL just concluded the 2017 draft. As usual, it was three days full of excitement, drama, and way too many opinions. It also helped confirm in my mind a little hypothesis I have been developing for some time: The NFL is the girl in high school that is socially oblivious, dumb as a box of rocks, kind of a jerk, but is pretty hot. Allow me to elaborate. That girl from high school had no problem getting dates. All the dumb, hormone driven, high school boys could easily overlook her lack of intelligence, her meanness, or her propensity to say or do publicly embarrassing things because...hotness. All those other negative qualities did nothing to lessen her popularity with the guys. That's the NFL. The NFL draft is three days of the NFL showing off, patting themselves on the back, and doing it all in the most bombastic and cringe-worthy manner possible. And we still watch. Because hotness. The NFL is hot, has been hot for a long time, and will be hot for many more years to come. It will be hot until all the negatives about the sport finally surpass how attractive it is to fans. And believe me, that time is coming.

The NFL is socially oblivious because teams continue to draft players with awful character simply because they are good at football. Of course the Bengals drafted Joe Mixon. Because Mixon is really good at football. Nothing else matters to the league or to many of the teams. They will take any little PR hit in the hopes that players like Mixon can help them win. I'm all for second chances. I really am. As a Christian, second chances are pretty much built into the DNA of my faith, but giving someone like Mixon a "second chance" doesn't have to mean drafting him and paying him million of dollars. It could mean something entirely unrelated to football. Something that might actually help him become a

solid, productive member of society.

The NFL is dumber than a box of rocks because it keeps letting Roger Goodell announce the name of each drafted player in the first round. Goodell doesn't do many things well, besides being the owner's dancing monkey, and his inability to correctly pronounce the names of the draft picks is the cherry on top of his curdled sundae. Beyond the fact that he struggles with pronunciation, he has no stage presence, makes the whole thing very awkward, and he gets booed vociferously every time he walks up to the podium. It's bad television and it's a bad look for the NFL. But we still watch. Because hotness.

And for the love, stop with the weird hugging!

Even with all this, and so much more, ratings were up from last year. That's because we are all a bunch of hormone riddled boys and the NFL looks good in a short skirt. I fear I may have taken this analogy to a very uncomfortable place. Moving on!

Draft Winners and Losers

I think we can all safely say that Chicago giving up what they did to move up one spot to draft a completely unproven QB was a strange decision. I'll go one step further: It was a bad move. I officially declare the Bears as the biggest losers of the 2017 NFL Draft.

From my vantage point, I don't believe there was any one team that clearly won the draft – a lot of teams had solid drafts. If I were a draft expert (I'm not) I would hand out quite a few "A" grades this year. Many teams seemed to be working with

actual plans to make their teams better. Novel approach for sure, but it looks like planning and strategy were more popular than usual. A few teams that got better this weekend: San Francisco, Houston, Arizona, and Philadelphia.

Travis Rudolph

I'm sure you heard the story about the Florida State wide receiver, Travis Rudolph, that went to a local school and sat down with a boy who was eating alone. The boy was Bo Paske, who has autism. The story went viral and Bo was able to go to many FSU games and events after that, due to his new friendship with Travis. Look, I don't know Travis but from all appearances, he seems like a great guy. Sitting down and eating with Bo was such a small gesture, but something that clearly spoke to so many people across the country. If a little act of kindness can have that kind of an impact on people, imagine how much we can do by just being decent and kind.

I've since read that Travis' father was killed in an accident at work – the weekend before the draft. Rudolph did not get selected by any team in the draft this year, but has signed as an undrafted free agent with the New York Giants. I am rooting for him and praying for his family during this time of mourning. I'm sure this has been an incredibly confusing emotional rollercoaster for them.

If he can put up moves like this in the pros, he might just make it.



Titans Talk



I can honestly say that my initial reaction to the Titans taking Corey Davis with the 5th pick of the draft was confusion and a little bit of frustration. I thought it was a reach. I liked Davis, and have been reading up on his career at Western Michigan for the past few months. I even liked the idea of the Titans drafting him, but 5th overall just seemed way too high. Then, the other two wide receivers with first round talent were taken before the 10th pick and I realized that Jon Robinson knew what he was doing. Perhaps picking Davis caused the run on wide receivers. Perhaps he knew that other teams were going to take a wide receiver early. Whatever the answer, Robinson bet that none of the best receivers were going to be available at 18 (the other first round pick for the Titans) so he had to get his guy at 5. I'll take that. It was definitely a "need" pick, but if Davis is as good as expected, he will help the offense tremendously.

I “bet” last week that Robinson was going to trade at least one of his first round picks. I was wrong. He kept both picks and added a lot of speed and explosiveness to the team. He did trade a lot after that though, which sort of made me right. No? Okay. That doesn’t make me right at all. I did say he would take a receiver and a corner back though, so I should get some credit.

After watching and listening to the Nashville Predators in the playoffs, I can’t agree more with [this](#) take. The Titans desperately need to develop more traditions at Nissan Stadium. This team is about to be one of the best in the AFC, and it’s time the fans took their fanaticism to the next level. There are actually some great ideas listed in the comment section of the linked article on [Music City Miracles](#), ranging from borrowing/stealing a few ideas from the Predators or using the pre-game warm-up chant from the movie, *Remember the Titans*. (Disclaimer: I don’t condone all the comments or language used in the above comment section.) The Titans fan-base needs to get serious about this and make Nissan Stadium a place opponents fear and the Titans love. Just imagine 69,143 fans doing this chant in unison on a Sunday afternoon!

Final Thoughts

That’s it for this week. From this point on, until closer to the start of Training Camp, this “column” will be sporadic. There is just not enough NFL news each week during the offseason to justify a weekly article. Things will start to ramp up the closer we get to the season starting. And once the season does start, this will be at minimum a once a week endeavor. I hope you guys enjoy it and will stick around for the ride. Thanks for reading.

Dear Cleveland, You'll Regret Passing on Deshaun Watson

"If they [the Browns] pass on Deshaun Watson, they're passing on Michael Jordan." (Clemson coach Dabo Swinney)

Since I was a child, my dad has made the same joke about how to punish me when I've done something not too serious but still displeasing to him: "I'm writing you out of the will!" He told me this in 2010 when I rooted for Auburn over Oregon in the College Football National Championship game after the NCAA gave America a big middle finger by letting Cam Newton play. He said it again in 2015 when I did a Facebook tournament on fantasy-fiction giants and didn't include Mark Twain. He said when I was a teenager more times that I can count.

I fear this article may bring one more.

The Cannons are Gamecocks. It's our sports DNA. And to be a Gamecock you can no more support Clemson than you can take the square root of a negative number (and yes, anyone who claims to pull for both probably believes in unicorns and other imaginary things)[1. That's a joke. Root for sports however you want.]. Yet I cannot deny any of what I'm about to write. So much so that I'm writing it.

I agree in essence with what Dabo says above. Dabo says it in his own hyperbolic Dabo way but the man won a National Championship in large part because he says things like this often and people buy it and play up to it. So don't let the name dropping detract from the truth of the statement. Dabo

probably believes Watson will be Jordan but at minimum I know he thinks he's a can't miss prospect and will be an exceptional NFL quarterback. I do too.

The fact I believe this is a testimony to its truth. This is undoubtedly the biggest anti-bias piece I've ever written. I am supposed to loathe Deshaun Watson and wish him the worst at the next level. But I can't. I respect him too much. By sports fan contract I am supposed to hate the Green Bay Packers and St. Louis Cardinals, but I can't deny how good Aaron Rodgers and Yadier Molina are, both I'd say are Top 5 at their position of people I've ever seen play.

Same for Watson, even though I doubt I'll ever sports hate Green Bay or St. Louis the way I do Clemson. But after three years of seeing him lead a complete turn around of the Gamecock-Tiger rivalry and vault Clemson to the next and highest level, I have a decent grasp of DW as an athlete. I've watched him play dozens of times. As the saying goes, my two favorite teams are USC and whoever is playing Clemson. He as real a deal as I have ever seen.

Here's what I mean: In November 2013, we had just finished our fifth straight win vs. Clemson which hadn't been done by either school in nearly a century. Then Watson showed up. His freshman year they beat us 35-17 as he played on a torn ACL. He missed part of the game or it would have been 42-10 at best. The following year we rallied from down 28-10 to pull within 28-25 in the fourth quarter and the next drive Watson calmly led them down the field, converting three backbreaking 3rd downs, ran for the eventual touchdown and put the game away. In 2013 I was crowing about that five game winning streak over our hated rival. Within two years we were 3-9 and they were on onside kick away from winning the whole thing. Within three years they beat us 56-7 and did beat Alabama to win it all. Football teams of course have many moving parts. You couldn't have watched Clemson the last two years and not been blown away by their D-line, their receiving corps (watch

the game-winning drive vs. Bama to see a clinic of how to catch a football) and everything else. But Watson was the Alpha Dog. The Superhero. The [I'm Keith Hernandez](#) on the team. "He's a program changer," says Dabo. Gamecock fans cannot argue.

Clemson was in much better shape when Watson arrived in 2014 than the Browns are presently, but if there is any QB in this draft that can be the most crucial piece to turning around a sadsack franchise like Cleveland, it's him. I am not going to throw an avalanche of stats at you. If you want those they are easily accessible on the internet. If you want someone to talk about throwing motion or release time, you'll have to go elsewhere.

No, my opinion on Watson comes not just from his known ability to lead an offense to score almost at will on even the best defenses in the country, but also from a word I often disparage in talking about quarterbacks: intangibles[2. Since I know many of our readers will know what I've written about Tom Brady, let me go ahead and anticipate some objections. I believe the QB is the most important position in football. Yet I believe they control maybe 20% of what happens. I believe intangibles are a real thing in quarterbacking (See: Cutler, Jay), but I don't think Tom Brady has some intangible that Dan Marino didn't that causes him to win Super Bowls. I do not think Brady is a bum. He's clearly one of the 15-20 greatest ever. Just not near the greatest to me. Intangibles don't cause Atlanta to fall out of FG range twice and the Atlanta safety to deflect an interception off his hands so Edelman can make a near physically impossible catch. There's no contradiction here. As great as Watson is, I don't think he could come back for his senior year and play for Wake Forest and win the championship. That's the essence of the Brady argument.]. After watching Watson time and time again on the biggest stages it is painfully obvious to me that he thrives under pressure. It's obvious that he cannot be rattled. It's

obvious that he can throw an interception and shake it off and come back and throw a gorgeous long ball the very next drive.

Watson smiles a lot. Watson exudes confidence that can be felt on a 2D TV screen. Watson is exactly the kind of athlete that can look at a 53 year NFL Championship drought and but completely unfazed by it. He's basically the anti-Jay Cutler in this regard. I have no doubt his teammates will love him. Coaches will adore working with him. For all his similarities to Cam Newton, I cannot imagine him leaving in the middle of a press conference even after losing the Super Bowl. It is this, far more than throwing motion or TD to Int ratio, that I think makes him can't miss.

Talent matters of course. Danny Wuerffel of Florida was the best college QB I've ever seen (had Watson stayed four years he could have passed him) and he flopped in the NFL. But Watson isn't a system QB and he has the right tools to play at the next level. I have zero doubt.

After the 56-7 mauling by Clemson over us a few months ago, Watson said, "It was like a daddy spanking their child." I want to be angry at Watson for that, but I can't. I texted my brothers that quote and Ashley replied, "You have to admit that's funny right there." And it's also true[3. Not be outdone, Clemson WR Mike Williams threw the ultimate shade at my school by saying he didn't know any of our secondary players' names. Sometimes in sports you just have to take it. Gamecocks have no comeback to that right now.]. I'm proud to be a Gamecock but Clemson gets the football accolades for this time. The most important position on a football field is the quarterback. Cleveland desperately needs one. They need Deshaun Watson. Or else they will regret it far more than I will regret being written out of my dad's will for saying so.