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CLEVELAND BROWNS

DRAFT  RECAP

CLEVELAND BROWNS

2024 NFL DRAFT RECAP

2024 CLEVELAND BROWNS DRAFT

| RD. | NO. | PLAYER, POSITION, HEIGHT, WEIGHT, SCHOOL |
|-----|-----|---|
| 1 | 23 | (a-traded to Houston) |
| 2 | 54 | Mike Hall Jr., DT, 6-3, 300, Ohio State |
| 3 | 85 | Zak Zinter, G, 6-6, 310, Michigan |
| 4 | 123 | (a-traded to Houston) |
| 5 | 156 | Jamari Thrash, WR, 6-0, 190, Louisville (b-from Arizona Cardinals) |
| 5 | 157 | (c-traded to Minnesota) |
| 6 | 197 | (d-traded to Atlanta) |
| 6 | 206 | Nathaniel Watson, LB, 6-0, 233, Mississippi State (e-from Baltimore Ravens) |
| 7 | 227 | Myles Harden, CB, 5-11, 195, South Dakota (f-from Tennessee Titans) |
| 7 | 243 | Jowon Briggs, DT, 6-1, 313, Cincinnati |

a - March 20, 2022: The Browns traded 2022 1st, 2022 4th, 2023 1st, 2023 3rd, 2024 1st and 2024 4th round picks to Houston for QB Deshaun Watson and 2024 6th round pick.

b - Aug. 24, 2023: The Browns traded QB Josh Dobbs to Arizona for 2024 5th round pick.

c - May 16, 2023: The Browns traded 2024 and 2025 5th round picks to Minnesota for DE Za'Darius Smith, 2025 6th and 7th round picks.

d - Oct. 10, 2022: The Browns traded 2024 6th round pick to Atlanta for LB Deon Jones and 2024 7th round pick.

e - April 29, 2023: The Browns traded 2023 7th round pick to Baltimore for 2024 6th round pick.

f - April 12, 2014: The Browns traded T Leroy Watson IV to Tennessee for 2024 7th round pick.

2025 CLEVELAND BROWNS DRAFT PICKS

- Own picks in rounds 1-4 and 6
- 6th round pick from Minnesota (DE Za'Darius Smith trade)
- 6th round pick from Detroit (WR Donovan Peoples-Jones trade)
- 7th round pick from Minnesota (DE Za'Darius Smith trade)

SECOND ROUND

MIKE HALL JR.

DT | 6-3 | 300 | Ohio State

CAREER TRANSACTIONS

Originally selected by the Cleveland Browns in the second round (54th overall) of the 2024 NFL Draft.

KEY NOTES

- During three seasons at Ohio State (2021-23), appeared in 28 games with 11 starts, totaling 45 career tackles, 10.0 tackles-for-loss and six sacks.
- In 2023, had a career best 24 tackles and was named third-team All-Big Ten Conference.
- Appeared in 12 games during the 2022 season, tying for the team lead with 4.5 sacks.
- Red-shirted the 2021 season after appearing in four games.

PERSONAL

- Native of Streetsboro, Ohio where he attended Streetsboro High School, leading the Rockets to their first-ever playoff win as a junior.
- Grew up in Cleveland, first living in Garfield Heights until he was 15 years old before moving to Streetsboro. Attended Benedictine High School and spent the remaining three years at Streetsboro High School.
- Recently became a father to his son, Michael "Trey" Hall, in 2023.



Source: AP

THIRD ROUND

ZAK ZINTER

G | 6-6 | 310 | Michigan

CAREER TRANSACTIONS

Originally selected by the Cleveland Browns in the third round (85th overall) of the 2024 NFL Draft.

KEY NOTES

- Appeared in 45 games with 42 starts along the offensive line during his college career at Michigan (2020-23).
- Voted team captain by teammates in 2023.
- Three-time All-Big Ten selection.
- In 2023, appeared in 12 with 12 starts and was named an All-American and All-Big Ten selection. Helped Michigan win the CFP National Championship.
- Helped Michigan's offensive line win the Joe Moore Award as the nation's top unit in 2021 and 2022.

PERSONAL

- Native of North Andover, Mass. and attended Buckingham Browne and Nichols School prep school. Also competed in track and field and won state titles in shot put and discus as a sophomore and junior.
- Wrote an illustrated hardcover book called The Men Up Front, which explores offensive line play and Michigan traditions.
- Majored in sport management.



Source: AP

FIFTH ROUND

JAMARI THRASH

WR | 6-0 | 190 | Louisville

CAREER TRANSACTIONS

Originally selected by the Cleveland Browns in the fifth round (156th overall) of the 2024 NFL Draft.

KEY NOTES

- Appeared in 49 games with 28 starts with Georgia State (2019-22) and Louisville (2023), recording 167 receptions for 2,610 receiving yards and 18 receiving touchdowns.
- In 2023, was named second team All-ACC after leading the Cardinals with 63 receptions, 858 receiving yards and six touchdowns.
- Led the Sun Belt with 1,122 receiving yards at Georgia State in 2022 and was named first team All-Sun Belt Conference.
- As a sophomore, led the Panthers with 32 receptions and 452 receiving yards.
- Finished career at GSU fifth in rec. yards (1,752), eighth in receptions (104) and tied for sixth in touchdown receptions (12).

PERSONAL

- First name is pronounced juh-MAR-ee.
- Native of LaGrange, Ga. and attended Troup County High School.
- Class AAAA 1st-Team All-State as a senior (10 rec TD).

SIXTH ROUND

NATHANIEL WATSON

LB | 6-2 | 195 | Mississippi State

CAREER TRANSACTIONS

Originally selected by the Cleveland Browns in the sixth round (206th overall) of the 2024 NFL Draft.

KEY NOTES

- Appeared in 57 games with 46 starts in his collegiate career at Mississippi State (2018-23), recording 379 tackles, 21 sacks, two interceptions and seven passes defended.
- Led the SEC in total tackles (137) and sacks (10) in 2023.
- Became the first SEC player to lead the conference in both tackles and sacks in the same season.
- Named a finalist for the 2023 Butkus Award for the nation's top linebacker after recording 137 tackles and 10 sacks in 12 games.
- Named the 2023 AP SEC Defensive Player of the Year.
- Finished second in the SEC with 113 tackles and a team-leading 12 sacks in 2022.

PERSONAL

- Native of Maplesville, Ala. and attended Maplesville High School.
- Graduated with Masters in Workforce Education and an undergraduate degree in interdisciplinary studies.
- Uncle, Harold Morrow, played in the NFL with the Minnesota Vikings (1996-02), Baltimore Ravens (2003-04) and Arizona Cardinals (2005).



Source: AP



Source: AP

SEVENTH ROUND

MYLES HARDEN

CB | 5-11 | 195 | South Dakota

CAREER TRANSACTIONS

Originally selected by the Cleveland Browns in the seventh round (227th overall) of the 2024 NFL Draft.

KEY NOTES

- Appeared in 29 games with 28 starts in his collegiate career at South Dakota (2020-23), recording 143 total tackles, six interceptions, 20 PBUs, four FR and 5 FF.
- Named third team AP FCS All-American and first team All-Missouri Valley Football Conference in 2023. Led the Coyotes with 6 PBUs.
- In his junior season, finished tied for fourth in the FCS in forced fumbles with four. Also led the team with three interceptions and was named second team All-Missouri Valley Football Conference.

PERSONAL

- Native of Miami Gardens, Fla. and attended Miramar High School where he also lettered in track.
- Majored in kinesiology and sport management.



Source: AP

SEVENTH ROUND

JOWON BRIGGS

DT | 6-1 | 313 | Cincinnati

CAREER TRANSACTIONS

Originally selected by the Cleveland Browns in the seventh round (243rd overall) of the 2024 NFL Draft.

KEY NOTES

- Appeared in 59 games with Virginia (2019-20) and Cincinnati (2021-23), recording 170 tackles and 12 sacks in his career.
- Named captain in 2023.
- Started all 12 games in his senior season, earning honorable mention All-Big 12 Conference honors.
- Was named first team All-American Athletic Conference in 2022, starting all 13 games in his first season with the Bearcats.

PERSONAL

- First name pronounced JOE-whan.
- Native of Cincinnati, Ohio and attended Walnut Hills High School.
- Married to wife, Nyaje, and has three children: Jowon, Reine and Zane.
- Was a tenor in the UVA University Singers ensemble.



Source: AP

Glenn Cook, Assistant GM and VP of Player Personnel and Catherine Raiche, Assistant GM and VP of Football Operations
4-26-24

What sold you on DT Michael Hall Jr?

Glenn Cook: "Just to talk through the process a little bit. Probably 20 minutes before the pick our phones started ringing and really did not stop. We had to really work through kind of what we wanted to do there. Looking through all the options. I think ultimately it came down to talent. He is a really talented young man. The way I would describe him is a shapeshifter. The way he can move his body, the way he can attack the quarterback. Probably next to (Executive Vice President, Football Operations and General Manager) Andrew (Berry), the most happiest person was (defensive coordinator) Jim Schwartz. With our attacking style he fits our motto and style. Really excited with his ability upside, and his ability to impact the quarterback. Those are the things to highlight just to start. Really excited to get him."

Was it a tough decision not to accept a trade?

Glenn Cook: "We worked through it. It is funny, I told Cat (Catherine Raiche) when we were sitting there, that we worked through a few scenarios earlier this week. This was one of them. I think we had played it out in our minds and kind of thought through what was the best choice and decision at the time. Ultimately it just came down to the player. Sometimes you just have to sit and collect talent for your team. That is how we thought through it."

There is a report that says he might be a little light to play in the NFL. What is your response to that?

Catherine Raiche: "I think when you look at how we play the position and how we ask our guys to get off the ball and how athletic and quick you need to be. That is what Michael is going to bring to the table. I mean Jim got on the phone with him and gave him a quiz and he was ready to roll. He is about to be the engine of this defense and I am not going to use the words they used but let's just say mess things up in the front there. I think that is what he is going to bring to the table."

Were there more than one player options that the Browns could have taken there?

Cook: "Yeah, I think we felt good about what our options were. We were working through that. Honestly, I don't think we expected as many calls as we got. So that maybe changed a little bit of how we thought through it. But we felt good about our alternatives regardless of what we needed to do. Fortunately, we did not have to."

What if Michael Hall Jr. was not there?

Cook: "We had enough scenarios and enough options to feel good about whatever we chose."

When you see a bunch of defensive tackles go off the draft board before you guys go up there. How much does that affect the thinking of maybe this is the right time to make a pick?

Cook: "Yeah, I think that is just a part of the calculations that Andrew has to work through in his head as the picks are being made. I think it started early with (DT Washington Commanders Jer'Zhan) Newton, (DT Atlanta Falcons Ruke) Orhororo, those guys going off the board (Los Angeles Rams DT Braden) Fiske. You start to think maybe he goes a little bit earlier but I credit Andrew's (Berry) patience. Not getting too nervous about him potentially not making it to the pick and it worked out. You know sometimes it does not though, that is sort of the risk you take. Again it is a little bit of a calculation. As you get experience in this you kind of get a sense of who is interested and who potentially can take him. Sometimes it is the roll of the dice."

Raiche: "The thing I would add there is the pass-rush skill set on the interior is really something we were considering. When you look at where the market is going at that position and how these guys get paid that is really something that to have that still on the board at 54 was a great outcome for us."

So you added DE Quinton Jefferson, DT Shelby Harris, and DT Siaki Ika going into his second year. Can Michael Hall Jr. contribute as a rookie?

Cook: "I think he has to earn it just like are other guys. We would love if he did. Look, you can never have enough guys who can impact the quarterback and impact the passing game. So again he has to come in and obviously integrate himself into the way we do things. We hope he does. I think Andrew has talked about this we try to position ourselves where we don't feel like we need to force him to do that. This is one of those things where hopefully he reaches his maturity and his peak in a few years, we are not necessarily worried about day one does Michael Hall Jr. come in and play 80 snaps he has to earn it, So day one is just coming in and being on time and being in the right place we will see what it looks like in September."

Raiche: "I would add Jim (Schwartz) does a great job of keeping the guys fresh and having a good rotation in there. So as Glenn (Cook) said you cannot have too many."

Catherine to go back to what you were saying. The way defensive linemen are getting paid how are you seeing the profile of this position change especially in the last few years?

Raiche: "It is based off the ability to rush the passer from the outside from the inside, and really it is all across the line now, so getting to the quarterback, and making sure you can impact the game there has just been an emphasis for all teams and guys who can get off the ball, guys that are quick can really bring that to the table. I think are just going to continue to either go off in the draft quickly or just get paid on the open market."

The fact that he is not even 21 yet, how enticing is that when you are evaluating him with what you see on film?

Cook: "Yeah it is definitely a priority when you're thinking through who these players will be in Year 1, Year 2, Year 5. The age component, the experience not only with just playing college, but just their full life of football. Again, when he's doing what he's doing at 21, you're hopefully expecting him to only get better. It's a part of it for sure."

Did your great experience last year with Dawand and how he seemed to come in here and function so well, did that come into play at all with this decision?

Raiche: "I think it is a credit to our coaches, to our player development staff. One thing we take great pride in is how we get to know these players before they're in the building and once they are in the building, how we put everything that we can around them to support them and help them develop and hopefully have them as contributors as early as possible. Definitely great experience with Dawand and that is something we want to put in place for every single player that becomes a Brown and Michael is no exception to that."

Is there something you look at specifically that you say this is something he really needs to zero-in on to really maximize his potential? Is there a specific trait or part of his game that you see currently that fits that build?

Cook: "I mean, you could say that for every guy. So yes, I think all of these guys have something they can work on. I think you can go from Myles, to anyone on our team that is trying to get better at something."

Specifically, what do you look at?

Cook: "For him, the sky is the limit. Ultimately he has to just come in and maximize what he is. I don't think anything restrains him from being as good as he wants to be but himself. That's how I would put it on this player."

When you have similar grades on players from different positions, what determines the player? Is it your roster that determines who you pick when debating over a LB, WR, and Michael Hall? Is it strictly his talent or do you look at your roster and say he's liable to help us sooner than the LB or WR?

Cook: "I don't know that it's black and white. You probably should anchor your decisions just toward your overall philosophy and I think we try to do that. I would probably be remiss to try and pinpoint it and say Andrew thinks about it systematically this way every single time. I think it's pretty fluid. Sometimes it's talent and sometimes it is the state and the nature of your roster and team. Sometimes it's just the overall value you get or can receive from that player. I don't know if there is a straightforward yes or no answer."

There were several receivers on the board that were possible choices.

Raiche: "Yeah we talk about all scenarios as Glenn mentioned earlier. So most definitely in our process it is very collaborative. So when you think about what all goes into that decision, there are just so many elements that go into the integrated projection. Whether that's what the data or our model is saying, what the coaches evaluated when we had these guys in a Top 30 visit, character information, medical as you know, there are just so many things. So yes, definitely positional value is an element as well, but as we kind of all bake it together it just helps us inform where we are going to go."

Did you say something about the market of defensive tackles, can you elaborate a little more on that?

Raiche: "Of course. As you saw in the last two years of free agency periods, how high these guys are getting paid now and when they can rush the passer, there has definitely been an elite premium on that skillset. You can think of older rushers, I'm thinking of Javon Hargrave two years ago during free agency when he went to San Francisco. That's just where the market is going with these players, so when you can find that skillset in the Draft, that is on a cost control for player contract, that gives you a lot of flexibility and gives you the optionality to do other things somewhere else."

I know it's not all about sacks, but he had 1.5 last year. Did you see a reason for maybe not seeing production there or what did you see that you thought could be better at the next level?

Cook: "I think we just saw all of the things that we look for at the position. I think I led with his positives. The stats are sort of volatile, especially on the D-line. Sometimes sacks are not indicative. But again, ultimately it's a production business. We hope he is much more productive than that, but you just hang your hat on the traits and the ability and just some of the other components that we value pretty highly. We think he came out well in those areas."

Last year your team talked about how important culture was on the defensive side, so when you evaluate character, what stood out to you with Michael?

Raiche: "I think on the front end I would say that the room is super strong from a character standpoint, from a leadership standpoint. It's just, with guys that we've brought in to complete Myles, whether that's Dalvin or Za'Darius, we have a really strong room there. We feel really good to bring those young guys into this room, that they're going to have mentors and older players they can lean on. I think Michael's energy is definitely going to fit right into the culture and how this room is built."

**DT Michael Hall Jr.
Second Round 2024 NFL Draft
4-26-24**

Michael, congratulations. What does it mean to be from Cleveland, play at Ohio State and stay home?

"I feel like that's the greatest feeling ever in the world. You know, I gotta, you know, first and foremost give thanks to my lord and savior Jesus Christ. You know, without him, nothing is possible. So appreciative of him. And, you know, without him even giving me life, you know, to even be able to wake up today, you know, it's just real. It's a real blessing."

Hi, Michael, it's Ashley Bastock from Cleveland.com. I know you've gotten a chance to talk to Coach (Jim) Schwartz. It sounds like already just what's your first impressions of him and how you think you're going to fit in this defense and your pass rushing ability and all that?

"I mean, yeah, Coach Schwartz, you know, best of the best for sure. You know, he knows exactly what he's talking about. And, you know, you just got to go out there, you got to be physical, you got to play hard, get injured in the defense. And that's their whole philosophy, you know, everything else, you know, and then we got to be the anchor of the defense for sure. So, I mean, the red shape, naturally, you know, the tough coach is going to love on you a little bit for sure, but he's going to bring the best out of you, and I greatly appreciate that."

So why are you such a good pass rusher?

"Oh, I would just say my explosiveness and my get off, you know, just having my toolbox. Just learning that from Larry Johnson, my position coach at Ohio State. I mean, just, he developed me great into a player just understanding, like, different moves that I was already good at. Is just working off that and just having a good foundation, and he was able to build off that."

Hey Michael, these scouting reports always find ways to nitpick. The guy from NFL.com said that you might be a little light to withstand NFL games. What do you say to that?

"I would say, you know, obviously he didn't watch the tape, so, you know, it's nothing personal or anything about that. You know, a lot of people have a lot of stuff to say. The naysayers, you know, you can't focus on that. You got to focus on the positive. You know, you got to let those people have opinions."

Hey, Michael. Camryn Justice from News Five, Cleveland here. Congratulations. Before this draft, Denzel Ward was asked about what Buckeyes he wanted to have on the team, and your name was brought up, and he said that would be a great addition for you to come on this team and join him on this roster and him to have said that about you before you were picked, what does that mean to you?

"I mean, you know, two Ohio guys growing up here, you know, Cleveland, Ohio, is just a great feeling. You know, we know we're real familiar with the area, and, you know, to stay here our whole career, I mean, from Pop Warner to high school, middle school to college, Ohio State, you know, and then still staying home at the top of the peak of the level, so just great."

Hey, Michael, we know you ended up at Streetsboro, but I understand you start at Benedictine. Could you. Where were you born and how did you end up in Streetsboro?

"So, I was born in Garfield Heights originally, and I lived there just about my entire life. And then when I got to age, was it 15? That was. That was like, at the end of Benedictine. And then my mom found a job out of Streetsboro. That was. It was a better pay, so she decided, you know, it was better for us to

move out there. And Benedictine was going to be an hour drive every day to get to school, so it just wasn't beneficial to her. So, my last three years of high school out there, she's where? My sophomore year, senior year."

Hey, Michael, Tom Withers from the AP. We saw on tv just a little while ago that you became a dad during the season last year. What's fatherhood been like for you? How's that changed you?

"Yeah, it's been the best. It's been our greatest addition to my life, for sure. You know, teach me a lot of patience. You know, just be robot for my son. I mean, it's just the best feeling. For him to even be around this and witnessing this, using all the videos and, you know, just give him something good to look back on, like, you know, dang, my dad did something real positive, so."

Hey, Mike, Chris Easterling from the Akron Beacon Journal. You've talked about playing, you know, coming, you know, staying in the same area and, you know, playing in your backyard. Do you feel like, you know, that puts, I don't want to say puts pressure, but the opportunity to sort of be, you know, be a role model, be, you know, be someone that, hey, look, like you say, I came from here. I can look where I can go. How much do you sort of take that, you know, take that mindset, take, you know, you take that responsibility on?

"Oh, I mean, I love it. You know, I'm not one of those guys who's gonna run away from the pressure. I mean, I run to it, I'm gonna head on. So, you know, it's gonna be a lot of pressure on me playing in my hometown. You know, a lot of people gonna have a lot of expectations, but, you know, at the end of the day, as a player, I still have demands, you know, that I have to meet expectations. So I'm gonna hold myself very, you know, high on that and hold myself accountable. And it just got to be the best way that I can be and control the controllable."

Michael, I'm sure you watched the success that Dawand Jones had here last year as a rookie. How excited are you to join Dawand and maybe kind of follow in his footsteps in getting off to a great start as a rookie?

"Oh, yeah, that's my dog. You know, Dawand, he just called me right before this. I mean, just, were talking about this the whole time, even with my formal, in my 30 day visit. You know, they're just saying, like, man, if you get here, it's over with. Like, you know, they're the best duo, like offense, you know, offense defense wise. And we bring a lot of juice and practice, even at Ohio State. So I know it's going to be, you know, ten times more at the next level, but really blessed to be able to play with my brother for life."

Hey, Mike, I guess your teammates started calling you baby Aaron Donald pretty early on. Is that true? And I guess, what did that mean to hear that from them?

"I mean, I feel like that's a, you know, that's a great, you know, that's a great comparison, for sure. You know, a lot of people can't just be compared to that. So, you know, like, I mean, it just shows, you know, how my teammates are about me, but, you know, just greatly appreciative of them and just be around surrounded by guys, you know, that's top of the top, best of the best, you know, in the country."

Hey, Michael. Ashley Bastock from cleveland.com again, I think we ask every d lineman who gets drafted here about the opportunity to play with Myles Garrett. Just how much does that excite you, knowing the season he's coming off of? And how excited are you to get a chance to pick his brain every day?

"Oh, yeah, no doubt. I mean, from day one, I'm definitely going to be learning whatever he does. And he's just real aware of like - how does he get his body right? What does he eat? You know, what is he doing after practice? Just, you know, those guys, those vets, you know, they're not vets for no reason. They're not in this league, you know, playing multiple years back to back, having these great seasons, you know what I'm saying? So it's just a great honor to be around somebody like that, and I got to come in and put my hard hat on from day one until, you know, whenever I leave."

Michael, how much interaction did you have with Jim Schwartz in this whole process, either pro day or your visit here?

"Yeah, it was just really just my visit here. Coach Schwartz was - him and Coach Jacques (Cesaire) were on me. They weren't on me, but they were just, you know, surrounded by me throughout the whole day. So, you know, just building a great relationship from that, from the beginning, it came genuine, came natural."

Hey, Michael. I know, obviously, the Ohio State guys, there's a bunch of guys that went back this next year. Were you tempted at all to go back and try to chase a championship with those guys? Like, how close did you actually come to that before you decide to go to the NFL?

"I kind of made my decision before the season started. I was pretty sure on that especially then when I had my son late in the year, that solidified it. You know, it wasn't like I was tempted to go back. I mean, for sure. I mean, I feel like it's still unfinished business, but, my card has to do what's right for my family and it was just better for that, you know, in that way. I gotta. I can't think about it as just me and personal - you know what I'm saying - preference. Gotta think about it as a whole."

Opening Statement:

Berry: "Jeff, did you wear that hoodie in honor of Mike (Hall) [laughter]? All right. Okay, so, closing day two of the Draft with Mike Hall and Zak Zinter. Just quickly, what appealed to us about both players. You know, with Mike, he's really tailor-made for our attack front. He's explosive, he's quite quick. He can rush the passer. He's long, and he plays, really with a very high motor. He's really the quintessential three-technique in our defense. And for us, pass rushers will always come at a premium, especially those that can affect the pocket from inside and we think that's something that Mike will be able to do along our front. So, we're really excited to kind of keep him home, so to speak, and think his skillset and passion really matches perfectly for our organization. And then with Zak, I think you guys all know that we'll be a team that invests in the trenches, invests in the O line. Zak, we just thought, was a rock-solid all-around player his entire career at Michigan. He was really the heartbeat of their culture when we met with him throughout the pre-Draft process. You know, very smart, professional, passionate about football, and I think his blue-collar mentality will really fit well within our offensive line room. So, we're very excited to add both guys to the team tonight, and with that, I'll open up for questions."

[Zinter] like a red shirt this year? Will he play?

Berry: "You know, I think for any player that we add - any rookie that we add, time will tell. Like, I don't think any of us can really make that call. As we sit here today, the one thing I always talk about with Kevin, there typically aren't any red shirts in the NFL. Like, everyone who's on the 53 will be called into action at some point, but we're just excited to get him in the building and get him up and running."

Will he be healthy enough to compete?

Berry: "I gotcha. Yeah. Yes, yes."

Is Michael the one who rolled up on Zak?

"That, I don't know. Off the top of my head Tom (Withers)."

Was it difficult to resist trading 54? Glenn said there were a lot of phone calls.

Berry: "Yeah, I mean, we gave a lot of thought to doing so. Honestly, we felt like, with the run of players that we thought had the potential for real interior pass rush ahead of us, you know, that was probably our last opportunity to get a prospect that we thought could do that in a, what I would say, like a featured manner. So, ultimately, the offers weren't enticing enough for us to move off the spot, but we did give it great consideration."

We've been asked before, but it seems like you really do like to go to big schools like Ohio State, Michigan. What is the attraction there?

Berry: "I think that's probably just coincidence, Jeff (Schudel). We look for the best players. They come in all different shapes and sizes. We had guys on our board that were part of power five conferences, group of eight, and what I would say, like non-DI conferences. So that's just kind of how it's worked out. I wouldn't say that there's any bias in that regard."

It was said that Jim Schwartz was the happiest man in the room when you selected. If you could talk about how he's going to really fit into your defensive front.

Berry: "Yeah, Jim - anytime you get a pass rusher, Jim's happy. And, you know, I think one of the hardest things to find are players that either can or you project to have the ability to affect the quarterback from inside. Because, you know, we're in a favorable situation where you have either Myles (Garrett) or Z (Za'Darius Smith) on the outside and they really dictate the protection for the offense. That usually means in this game, you know, the interior player opposite them is going to get the one-on-one matchup with the goal. So, guys that can convert a one-on-one into pressure on a relatively consistent basis, they have great value for this scheme, but they also have great value when paired with the best defensive player in football."

How valuable is it to have Joel (Bitonio) and Wyatt (Teller) for a guy like Zak coming in?

Stefanski: "Yeah, extremely valuable. And he's coming into a really talented room, a room that supports each other, they'll push each other. But anytime you can attach yourself to veterans that have been there and done it at your position, I think is huge."

Was he able to work out for you guys?

Berry: "So, I mean, I won't - we didn't do a private or anything like that, but we felt really good about the medical. You know, they did send video of him, you know, moving around, on his own and kind of at his, I would say, like maybe private workouts. But he'll be ready to go this spring and there's really no

concern about the leg.”

How do you feel about the defensive tackle position because you signed some guys, you got Quinton. I mean, it just looks like a really super strong room right now.

Berry: “Yeah, we’ll always want to be strong up, you know, up front. We want to make sure that our defensive front, it’s a lot like the Guardians have a reliever day, right, where they’re, you’re throwing five or six pitchers for one to two innings apiece. That’s really how our defensive line rotation, that’s what it’s predicated upon, is guys throwing fastballs and then you’re really exchanging them out, almost like hockey shifts. That’s maybe a better analogy. So, we have to have depth there with the way that we play and the style of this specific scheme, and we feel good about the guys that we have in the room.”

All the attention seemed to be focused on wide receivers and tight ends. When it came to the speculation about what you might do. You come out of this with, you know, two guys in the trenches here. Was it a matter of, you know, those players just weren’t there for you anymore, or did you just, you know, feel like that the two guys, you got superseded what was available?

Berry: “I can’t help it if people don’t believe what I say every time I’m up here before the Draft. So, I mean, I think I’m pretty clear in terms of our philosophy in that regard. You know, I can’t help it if people don’t pay attention.”

Were there players at other positions at 54 that were serious considerations?

Berry: “No, we felt really good about Michael. And that’s not to say that there weren’t other players that we liked that went off after the pick or something along those lines. It’s not like he was the only good prospect at that spot, but we thought he was the best prospect for us.”

You have a biased guy in the building in Mike Vrabel, did he kind of help push you guys over there a little bit?

Berry: “You know, he got to spend some time with Mike as well as, you know, the rest of our coaching staff when he was in for his 30 visits. You know, Mike obviously likes his (Ohio State) Buckeyes, but we really follow the process, you know, through and through. But we have a lot of happy people in the building today.”

Was the goal in the offseason to get younger at both interiors, both sides of the ball?

Berry: “I wouldn’t say that was a specific goal. I think we’re not naive to the fact that we have guys that are either in their prime or the later stages of their prime, but I can’t say that was the primary purpose for selecting players that we did tonight.”

Did your plans for Michael include any kind of a convo with Dawand (Jones), because they seem to be super close?

Berry: “We have a lot of Ohio State alumni who were very excited and very positive on Mike Hall. Actually, the individual that you all should talk to on Mike is Luke Wypler. They were lockermates and lifting mates for two years at Ohio State, they might as well be brothers.”

Just Zak, I mean, was such a leader, you know, viewed so strongly in that Michigan locker room, you know, that those intangibles, that sort of thing. How much, you know, how much you guys, you know when you’re breaking, especially him. How much did that kind of come off the page?

Berry: “The football makeup of an individual always comes into play as part of the evaluation of where you’re going to take them off the board or how you’re going to invest in the player. And that’s something that came back unanimously strong with everyone that we talked with that was around the Michigan program, so it certainly played a role and we’re excited to add him to the group.”

Would he have a first-round grade without the injury?

Berry: “I don’t know that I could speculate on that, Tony (Grossi). I just know that we liked him. I can’t. I don’t know what the rest of the league would have thought.”

Being that Joel Bitonio is coming back is there a chance he just isn’t ready to hang it up?

Stefanski: “Not necessarily in that way, Mary Kay (Cabot). He’s a huge part of what we do. He’s a huge part of who we are. You know, had a lot of conversations with him over the years, but not worrying about those types of things. He’s just been a great leader for us, been a great player for us, and he’ll continue to do that.”

The sack numbers for Michael were down a little bit and Glenn (Cook) talked about this, too, but what are some other things that you guys really liked about his pass rush that really showed through in this film?

Berry: “Yeah, I think it’s probably a little bit. I remember when we selected Martin (Emerson Jr.), I think one of the first questions was like, oh, well, this

guy had zero interceptions his last year, one career interception. And it's kind of like when we've talked about Myles (Garrett), like over the past - the second half of the year where I think everybody focuses on sacks when really with Mike, he was really one of the more disruptive forces in college football, specifically in pass rush. Like guys that can win one-on-one, they create pressure. That's just a lot more informative than looking at someone's counting stats or sack numbers, which just aren't as predictive. You know, Mike has really exceptional physical tools. He has outstanding get off, quickness. He's very long, and he uses his hands well. And I think specifically, as he continues, I mean, he's only 20 years old - as he continues to grow into his body, he can already win two ways, and I think realistically, he'll very quickly learn how to win three. So guys that can do that, they're just very hard to block when you give them a two-way go and the slide is pushed away from them."

How many guys did you have at the Ohio State vs. Michigan game this year?

Berry: "I have no idea, Tony. I do not remember. I do not remember. It seems like eons ago."

Considering those trade offers before you pick Michael, how much was not having a fourth round pick a factor in whether or not you were going to make it?

Berry: "It was part of it. Like, it was definitely part of the thought process. I'm not going to sit here and tell you that I wouldn't have liked to walk out of the evening with an earlier pick in day three, but you have to balance that with what the actual offer is. I'm not going to prioritize that over everything else. If it's a bad offer to move back, or if you're at the end of a run for a premium skill set. And so all that comes into consideration when you're making the decision."

Glenn had mentioned that when you guys were gaming through your draft scenarios, the scenario that occurred actually happened, where you had trade offers coming in, the phone's ringing off the hook, and Hall is sitting there, is there any satisfaction there you take away from that where, you know, something that you had worked on, it just kind of fell the way that you'd hoped?

Berry: "I think it's probably just more credit to just our process for preparation with strategy and particularly Ken Kovash. He deserves a ton of credit because he really heads the month of April with our strategy prep. So really, at that point, it ends up being about execution. And it was a similar scenario. I can't say it was the exact same, but I feel like, you know, because of that part of the process we never really come into a draft where there's something that really catches us off guard."

Did the experience with Dawand last year and how well he integrated and was able to get thrown into the fire, inform in any way your selection of Michael, or do you take these guys on such a case by case?

Berry: "Yeah, that's all. I would consider those two, you know, completely separate circumstances. But look, we get a lot of insight into Ohio State, for all the obvious reasons, and we feel we're really excited, feel really good about Mike."

Is it feasible at all to get in the fourth round tomorrow with what you have?

Berry: "Anything's feasible. I mean, we'll see. We'll see tomorrow. See if I have a track up my sleeve or two."

Stefanski: "Tony, tune in tomorrow."

That defensive tackle position, like some of the contracts that have been handed out the last couple of years, the run that kind of preceded your guys' pick. Are you seeing it changing in how teams are prioritizing that position?

Berry: "I think it's less about how they're prioritizing the position in general and more about paying a premium for guys that can rush the passer from inside because that's just one of the hardest skill sets to find. So players that can do that, like you said, Dan (Labbe), that's going to be, that's already north of a \$25 million player. And so, you know, I think it's really more that as opposed to just any defensive tackle, it's the guys that can rush."

So I go to this NFL.com scouting report because I don't know these guys, and says that maybe he's too small, he picked out his size, that he's too small to be a durable NFL defensive tackle. So what do you say to that?

Berry: "So who is arguably the greatest defensive tackle of all time?"

I looked up a scouting report on him ten years ago, and it was basically the same thing.

Berry: "You know, you look at John Randall like, I think all of that really depends on what you're asking them to do within the scheme. And also just quite honestly, not everybody with the same dimensions is built the same like Mike, he's very long. He was, I think he was actually 299 [pounds] at his pro day and he's 20 years old. So, I mean, the weight was never really an issue for us, even if he didn't show up at 299 at the pro day or anything like that. And I'm

sure, I mean, he may not admit it publicly, but I'm sure a little bit of that was probably water weight anyway. But no, I think in this scheme, again, it's about getting off the line and rushing the passer. And we really stopped the run game with numbers. You know, I think when Jim (Schwartz) got hired and we talked to you guys earlier, it's not a space eating position for us. We want guys who can move. And so our prototype for the position is going to look a little bit different than other schemes in the league."

G Zak Zinter
Third Round 2024 NFL Draft
4-26-24

How are you doing health-wise? How does the leg feel, has that healed?

"Yeah, I'm great. I'm cleared for everything. So, you know, it's just been building the strength back and, you know, getting moving again. But I'm cleared for everything. I'm feeling great. I'm ready to roll."

We were looking at the video, was that Michael Hall that fell on the back of your leg?

"Yeah, it was."

Is it kind of strange now that you guys are together?

"Yeah, I mean, everything kind of comes full circle I guess."

Do you feel almost fortunate that the injury was a broken tibia and fibula? It could have been your knee?

"Yeah, no, definitely. I mean, I've been saying all along that this is the best worst-case scenario. You know, I mean, it's just bone, bone heals easily. Way better than ligaments or the knee or the ankle. So, I mean, it was a clean break and, you know, the bone's healing great. So definitely the best case scenario."

Did you talk to Michael after that at all? Did you ever hear from him? Have you guys had any connection since that moment and just how bizarre is it that after that sort of fateful play, that you guys are ending up here together and you're going to be going against each other in practice?

"Yeah, I mean, I've talked to him once when we were on a visit together, you know, but he's a great dude, and it's football. You know, stuff happens when we're playing in the trenches, but I'm fired up and I think everything happens for a reason. So, just kind of a full circle moment for that to happen and now we're going to be teammates. I'm just, I'm fired up to get there and get to work with him in practice, for sure."

It seemed like after your injury the team really rallied around you just about in every way possible. We've heard a lot about your leadership, how do you think that aspect of who you are as a person and a player can translate into the NFL now?

"Yeah, I mean, I'm a humble, hard working dude that built a lot of relationships and became a leader at Michigan and I'm excited to do the same thing. Come in and just keep my head down and work hard and prove myself to the guys that are already there and do whatever I can to help the team win on Sunday."

Andrew Berry said that he was excited about the fact that he thinks you're going to fit into what is a blue-collar offensive line. What about this unit, the guys that are on here, and maybe this city of Cleveland are you feeling like you're going to fit into?

"Yeah, I mean, I love it. You know, I'm a blue-collar guy at heart. I love hunting and fishing and I think Michigan's a blue-collar team too. So, I've been around it for four years, especially in the O-line room. Just a bunch of dudes that work hard and love to play ball. So I think the city of Cleveland and the whole group that's there, the team, the O-line, I'm excited and pumped to get in there and start getting to know the guys and just get to work."

How much have you watched Joel Bitonio and Wyatt Teller over the course of their career and how much do you know about them and how excited are you to be able to have two guys of that caliber to learn from?

"Yeah, no, I'm pumped. Obviously I've seen them and watched them over the years and just to have guys like that where I can come in and try to follow in their footsteps and try to learn how they do it. Just to get in there and learn from them and try to do whatever I can to help the team win. So I'm excited to be able to learn from them along the way."

How hard was it after the broken leg and then watching what Michigan was able to do? I know the teammates celebrated you and you were there for all of it, but just how difficult was that experience for you?

"Yeah it's definitely bittersweet. I decided to come back for my senior year last year to come back with the guys and compete and win a National Championship. To go down on my senior night, last game in the big house against Ohio State, all that kind of stuff is definitely bittersweet. The boys rallied around me and we came out on top."

What was that first phone call like with Andrew Berry and Kevin Stefanski just welcoming you to the team?

"Yeah I was fired up. We're down in the basement, all my family around me, and it was just a great call. They're excited to have me. I'm fired up to get there and I don't think I could have gone to a better team. I'm just excited to get there tomorrow."

DT Mike Hall Jr. and G Zak Zinter
4-27-24

Mike, you weren't obviously asked last night about this, but considering how you guys are connected from last November, how surreal, strange, everything that, as Zak said before, comes full circle now that you guys are teammates in the NFL?

Mike Hall Jr.: "Yeah, I mean, I would just say, you know, first off I mean, 'the game', in itself, you know, the up north and Ohio State rivalry is insane, you know, from day one, whenever you attend these prestigious colleges, that's the main goal, so. But, you know, being my rival, my first my three years throughout my career, then finally being teammates, yeah, it's crazy to, see them in the building. I'm going to be seeing him day in and day out, you know, but, I mean, we're brothers now and it's all about that."

What kind of reaction have you gotten since last night from just northeast Ohio, friends, family, as you got to hear from more people about being with the hometown team?

Hall Jr.: "Yeah, being with my hometown team has just been a blessing coming true. You know, it's just the greatest feeling ever. You know, I feel like - I mean, everybody wants to stay home, but sometimes it's not a reality, but waking up this morning it's an actual reality. Like, I mean, waking up as a Cleveland Brown, it's insane. We talked, I mean, I talked about this in my family, friends, ever since I played football, you know, at the age of six."

Playing in that style offense you had there in Michigan, how will that prepare you for the NFL?

Zinter: "Yeah, I mean, I think it's perfect. I mean, you know, we're a run first offense for sure, run the ball a lot, and then they start stacking the box in with a play action. But, I mean, J.J. (McCarthy) was able to pass the ball, too. So I think we're pretty diverse, you know, and able to do a lot of things. So I'm excited to see how that's going to help me translate to the NFL."

You made 41 starts at right guard, but how much experience do you have playing other positions?

Zinter: "Yeah, so I cross-trained to play center. My sophomore year, we had an older guy come in who was a walk-on, earned his way to have a scholarship. Fifth year guy, he had some back problems, so I cross trained to play center. He was able to make it through the year, so I never had to play, but I played center in two spring games, two springs. So, you know, I have experience there just never any true actual games."

You guys are brothers now, but go back to that game in November 25, and Zak gets hurt. What's that like for you guys to see a moment like that where a guy gets carted off the field? Because you could happen to anybody, right?

Hall Jr.: "Oh, yeah, no doubt. Like, were just talking about that, and were just saying, like, you know, 'Whoever's going to win that game, that was the National Championship game'. So they won a national championship, so it was no coincidence. But, I mean, just seeing that and it's obviously the biggest rivalry in all of sport. But, I mean, just to see that out there, and, I mean, we even prayed for him after, you know, when that happened. So, I mean, it was just real tragic to see that. I mean, he's a hell of a player and my teammate now and my brother, but, you know, we're just real. I mean cause when you go out there against those guys, you want to play against the best. You don't want to go against - no offense to anybody, but the second or third [string], you want to go against the top. I mean, and this game is all about competing."

Zak was telling us yesterday that you reached out to him after that injury. Can you just kind of share with us, like, when you did that and what you were feeling and sort of what you said?

Hall Jr.: "Oh, yeah, no, we were just checking up on him, just making sure everything's good. I mean, I know he wanted to play in the National Championship game. That was just I mean, everybody would want to do that, though, for sure. So, I mean, for sure, it was just a tragic event that happened."

In the minutes and hours after that injury, all the things you processed, did you worry about your NFL future at all?

Zinter: "I mean, it definitely crossed my mind. I mean, you know, going into that game and, you know, the year I've had and then that happening, I didn't

know what had happened at that point, but, I mean, it definitely crossed my mind. You know, I knew something had happened to my leg. I didn't know how bad or how good it was, but, I mean, it's definitely something that crossed my mind for sure."

You said you could actually feel something with the bones as you were being carted off?

Zinter: "Yeah. So, like yes. Like, when the doctors came out, like, my leg was kind of sideways, so they straightened it out and I could feel all the bones in there, like crinkling kind of, and touching them, so wasn't the best experience. But, you know, we got through it."

So where are you health wise have you hit all the checkpoints? And where are you in terms of your rehab?

Zinter: "Yeah. So I'm cleared for everything. So at this point, it's just building the strength back up, building the stamina. But the legs healed, so at this point, it's just building the calf strength and the muscles around it back up."

You weren't able to work out for any teams?

Zinter: "No. I made a video a couple of weeks [ago] - or a week and a half ago that I posted on social media, but I didn't work out. No, sir."

Gonna be in a room now with Wyatt Teller, Joel Bitonio. What do you hope to learn from those two guys? And just how exciting is it for you to be in a room with two of the best in the game?

Zinter: "Yeah, I mean, I'm pumped to have two guys like that, you know, that have done it and are doing it at a high level. I mean, just, you know, I'm pumped to come in, be in that room, and just learn from them. Just see how they go about their everyday lives, you know, how they prepare, how they attack practice, all that kind of stuff. And just mimic and attach on them at the hip and just try to grow."

For both of you what's it like joining a team that's already a playoff team? You know, you're not here with a two and 17 or two and 15 team. So what's that like being on a playoff team?

Hall Jr.: "I mean, first and foremost, you know, just coming in with a team like this, you know, it's a winning tradition and starting to get back to winning a lot of games. That's a great thing in itself, and hopefully we'll be able to bring one back for the city of Cleveland."

Zinter: "Yeah, I mean, I'm excited. I don't like to lose. I like to win. And I've got some rings over the years, and I'm hoping to keep adding to them."

Did you attend Brown's games as a kid?

Hall Jr.: "I think I've been to one. I can't remember which one. I was real young."

Do you have a ton of family in town, or can you sort of describe what your family and friends situation is like here?

Hall Jr.: "Yes, I don't have too many family members in here. Just my mom, my brother, and just about it. Yeah really"

Part of you hoping to go somewhere else just to kind of broaden your horizons, maybe you spend all your life in Ohio, like did part of you think, 'okay, I might get drafted somewhere else'?

Hall Jr.: "Maybe. I mean, at the time, I felt good at my 30 visit here. You know, I felt at home and, you know, being here, I mean, it's just meeting the people and understanding the culture here and just I mean, Coach (Jim) Schwartz is just understanding his philosophy here is just - everything was a fit. I mean, from day one, I love to hear and even telling my mom and my brother, you know, 'I feel like, you know, Cleveland was the one', and luckily I ended up here, so it was the best thing ever."

Did you end up one-on-one at all over the last couple years?

Hall Jr.: "Yeah, a couple of times."

Zinter: "Yeah. He got me one play, he got me one play."

Hall Jr.: "No, he definitely - it was a pretty good battle. You know, he would give me a couple of times, but it's all about competing at the highest level, for sure."

I asked you about Jim Schwartz yesterday, last night. But what do you think in general about this scheme where we heard it last year, defensive tackles don't have to sit there and eat up blocks. They want you guys getting after the quarterback. I guess how much more do you think you can

unlock just with your passion, man.

Hall Jr.: "I feel like, you know, Coach (Jim) Schwartz is just going to bring the best out of me every day in and day out. And our whole philosophy is just to attack and disrupt. So, you know, just having that mentality and that mindset to finally be able to let the dog unleash, that's the best thing ever."

Were you a huge Browns fan growing up? And if so, who were some of the players you identify with or what are some of your Browns memories?

Hall Jr.: "I remember when Johnny Manziel got drafted here, Trent Richardson. That was the best thing ever. I mean, I even still watch, like, little highlights and stuff from the old things. But, yeah, it's just - I mean, it's just a dream come true to be a Cleveland Brown here. Growing up here, been here my whole life, so just a hell of a feeling."

What's it like being a published author?

Zinter: "Yeah, you know, I got a little kids book. You know, it's interesting for sure, you know, when NIL came out in that whole space and then this guy had reached out to us, like, 'I think you guys should make a kids book.' And I didn't really know what to think at first. And then, you know, we spent a good amount of time on it. A lot of help from our parents and our moms, too, for sure. Made sure it sounded right."

Were you and (Luke) Wypler good friends?

Hall Jr.: "Oh, yeah. That was - so I can't remember what season? I think it was [the] '22 season. That was my sophomore year. It may have been junior, senior year, but yeah, he was my lifting partner. So like in the offseason, that whole winter, spring, I mean, he's my lifting buddy every day, and you know at Ohio State we compete every day, even in the weight room. So just being able to understand, you know, people from different backgrounds and different ethnicities and just be able to create a close friendship and I mean, brothers for life. Ohio State is all about the brotherhood and be able to be with him every day."

Is he (Luke Wypler) happy?

Hall Jr.: "Yes, sir."

It's hard work working on the interior of the defensive line. What do you love most about it?

Hall Jr.: "Disrupting. I mean, just causing havoc, you know. I mean, I feel like the best thing ever is just making a quarterback, you know what I'm saying? Like, just look at you pre snap and, you know just having that anticipation, you know, just. I mean, just disrupting. That's the whole thing at d line, and just chasing out their quarterback all day. I mean, it's the best thing ever."

You moved to Streetsboro. You know, how did that affect your football journey? What role did Streetsboro and Pete Thompson play and where you are now?

Hall Jr.: "Yeah, so when I moved to Streetsboro, it was all new to me. Cause they weren't big on football. You know, they were a little bit more basketball, wrestling, so it was kind of all new to them when I came out there, I came from Cleveland Benedictine. So, I mean, they were a football school, football, basketball, so they kind of knew the woodwork of that. But going out here was just kind of changing the culture, you know what I'm saying? They haven't won a conference championship in like a decade or something. So, you know, to be able to arrive there and be a help to the team and bring back multiple of those and make multiple playoff appearances, I mean, that was the best thing to ever happen."

You began together in a way that you would not necessarily have wanted it to. What would you like the ending to this story to be for you two guys together?

Zinter: "Yeah, I mean, it started off - I mean, like, how it is, but, I mean let's go win a Super Bowl. Why not? You know what I mean? So, I mean, we guess were enemies in college, but now we're brothers. Now we're brothers and teammates."

Hall Jr.: "Right."

I saw on your social media you went gator hunting in the past, I don't know if you know but Wyatt Teller is also big into that. Are you excited to get to pick his brain about it?

Zinter: "Yeah, no, I'm excited. I'm a big outdoors guy, you know, hunting and fishing. So, you know, whenever I get some off time, it wasn't a ton in college - but, you know, whenever I did, I like to get outdoors and do that kind of stuff. So, I'm excited, for sure."

Ask Joe Thomas.

Zinter: "I know. I know."

Yesterday you mentioned Larry Johnson, what a big influence he was on you, I guess. In what ways, and how do you think he most helped your game?

Hall Jr.: "I mean, I feel like Coach (Larry) J helped me. I mean, he's helped me tremendously on the field of course, just understanding pass rush and all that and just how to cage the pocket and all that, how to be a disruptor. But I mean, I feel like the biggest thing he helped me is just, I mean, just off the field. You know, he's my mentor, and he was my sports psych before I was into sports psych. So, you know, just being transparent with him and being able to talk to him about anything, I feel like that was the the best thing that could have happened for me and him. And just to have that real close bond and that relationship, you know, it really helped me as a player."

You said you've been cleared, and now it's just a matter of building up your muscles in that leg. Does that mean you'll be able to be on the field, like in OTAS or looking at different timetable to get back to football stuff?

Zinter: "Yeah, no. I mean, I expect to be on the field for rookie minicamp here in a week and a half, you know, going through all the stuff on the field and just see what goes. But my leg feels really good now, so I expect to be on the field."

You think that all the Buckeyes in the locker room are going to embrace this?

Hall Jr.: "Yes, ma'am. I mean, as harsh as it sounds, I mean, we're brothers now. So, you know, you got to put the past aside and you just, we got to go out there and go win one."

Brought your own support group here. What can you say about them? And how much does it mean to share this moment with them?

Zinter: "Yeah, I mean, I got my parents here. I mean, they've been a huge part since the very beginning. You know, my dad played in college, so I mean my earliest memories are just watching college football games and when he was my coach playing flag and peewee tackle football. So it's pretty surreal to be here, be a Cleveland Brown and just have them by my side for the whole way has been unreal."

Hall Jr.: "Yeah, I feel like it's just a great experience to have my mother, my brother, my girlfriend, and my son here, you know, just to be able to provide my son, just being able to have him look at me, you know, later down the road when he gets older and watch this and see his dad doing something positive. I feel like that's the greatest thing ever as a father. But, I mean I love my mom, and she sacrificed so much for me and my brother, and I know she's going through a lot of emotions right now. So just real thankful and real appreciative of her, but also just give all the glory to my lord and savior, Jesus Christ. You know, without him, I'm nothing."

You had allowed no sacks and committed no penalties your senior season, obviously, until it ended prematurely. But how much pride did you take in that and what went behind you reaching that level of play?

Zinter: "Yeah, I mean, I think it just comes down to, you know, fundamentals. The dudes around me, I mean, our whole line, we mesh really well together, and we just every week, we go out there, try to play a clean game, you know, keep J.J. up, and just try to stay ahead of the sticks - penalties, holding penalties, false starts, you know, put you behind the sticks. And, you know, we didn't want to do that. So, you know, just focusing on the little details that had hurt us in the years past and, you know, trying to correct those and keep them out of the game."

The cerebral part of the game, which obviously is required to do those things, how much is that a strength of yours, along with leadership?

Zinter: "Yeah, I mean, I think it's a big part of my game being able to adjust on the fly and do all that kind of stuff and adapt. But, I mean, I think it's a strong part of my game, for sure."

Does your injury make you have, like, a different appreciation for the game? I mean, I know it sounds like it obviously could have been much worse.

Zinter: "Yeah, I mean, it definitely did. I mean, this was the only injury that has ever taken me away from the game ever in my career, especially through the last couple of seasons. Coming into this season, coming back for the last year, it being 'the game' against Ohio State, senior night in the big house, all that kind of stuff. I mean, it definitely brought the appreciation and love that I have for the game back because I missed being out there with the boys. You know, I want to get back on the field. I want to, start producing and doing all that stuff again. And it really did bring the love back. You know, I've been going on a great run and to have it all taken away really hurt. So, you know, I'm excited to keep grinding and get back out on the field."

Were you surprised the browns picked you or was there an indication they were interested in you?

Zinter: “Yeah, I mean, I had a great formal visit with them at the (NFL) Combine, and we had talked and, you know, with my agent as well. You know, I knew they had liked me and when those picks were coming around, I had my fingers crossed. And when the phone rang, I was super excited.”

Before the draft started, were you hoping to get reconnected with (Jim) Harbaugh?

Zinter: “I don’t know if I’m a West Coast guy, to be honest. But I would have been happy, you know, if they were to take me as well. Yeah.”

With the way you guys played at Michigan, and I’m thinking about that second half against Penn State when you guys are playing like that and just running the ball, how does that feel for you as a guard and then how does that mentality kind of translate here?

Zinter: “Yeah, I mean, I think, you know, we couldn’t block the guys on the edge and we’re getting some pressure and we said ‘All right, we can’t pass we’re going to run the ball.’ And, you know, we ran it 30 times. They knew we were going to run it and there was more of a mentality of, you know, ‘We’re going to run the ball, so can you stop it?’ And, you know, the coaches really put that in our hands, the running backs hands, and entrusted us with that, which was really special.”

Director of Player Personnel, Dan Saganey
4-27-24

Opening Statement:

“Before we get started, did you guys have (Mike) Hall and (Zak) Zinter square off in some one-on-one’s out there? I love to know who won because it’s going to be a good battle. We’re building bridges. We’re building bridges. Two good players, excited to get them, so hope it all went well with them.”

Can you tell us about Jamari (Thrash)?

“Yeah, we’re very excited to add Jamari (Thrash) to the roster. So Jamari, for us, we view him as a guy that can play inside and outside. He had a really productive college career at Georgia State and then decided to transfer up to Louisville last year and had another big year there. So, a guy with speed, a guy that showed up really well through the Senior Bowl process. We really enjoyed getting to know him through our spring scouting process. And, you know, with these picks at this time of the Draft, we’re really looking to find players that we’re looking forward to developing, having our coaches get their hands on him and, you know, see what they can do. So, he’s a competitive kid. He’s had production inside and out throughout his college career, and he’s a good playmaker with the ball in his hands. So, add him to the room and let him compete.”

He doesn’t have much special teams experience, but he said he knows that’s got to be his role going forward here. Is he a guy that you can envision, you know, using in those kinds of spots? I guess he was a gunner in school.

“Yeah, I mean, he’s got speed. He’s a tough kid and the thing that stands out about him, even for a slighter receiver, is that he can get off the line and knows how to win. That stuff usually translates pretty well to the gunner spots. So, again, a guy that you can probably develop as a returner as well, just given the production he’s had with the ball in his hand. So, you know, a guy that all those guys, they know they’re going to have to compete for roster spots and special teams is a big part of that. But when you’re looking at receivers, you know, if a guy has twitch, quickness, toughness, they usually find a way to get on the field. So, looking forward to seeing what he can do working with Bubba (Ventrone).”

You’ve been here a long time. Is there ever a conversation like, we should probably start adding some guys from that football factory 2 hours down the road?

“Well, we have lots of conversations about lots of different players. I figure you’d be asking about Akron at this point, but no – I mean, we’re trying to add the best players we can to our roster and everybody’s board’s different. You know, we kind of had to wait a little while today before we made a pick and really just trying to add the best depth and competitive players we can to our roster – regardless of school, regardless of background. All these guys of all different backgrounds these days. And, you know, it’s cool to see a guy have great success and then transfer up and have it translate well and work out well for him and then show up at the Senior Bowl and show out like he did. So, guys like that, you know, we’re excited to add at any point.”

Sure, everybody, most teams have the same opinion of where you’re at right now, the quality of players that are available. How hard is it to trade out at this point? Does anybody to trade out?

“We certainly do our due diligence, making a lot of calls. I mean, we’ve been honestly at all spots. We kind of talk about it every year where we’re very proactive, making calls up and down the board just based on who’s there, based on a handful of players that could be there. And then we kind of sit and wait to see where it goes. But again, you’re trying to find developmental players. We’re in a good spot with our roster where we have a lot of quality vets

on this roster that anybody that we draft at this point is going to be able to learn from some pretty good pros and guys that have been around a while. Again, our job is to help [them] play on the roster two, three years out down the line, and that's where these picks really become important and really good developmental pieces for us."

This is a general question, but with the transfer portal and everything, does that present any different challenges in scouting guides?

"That's a great question. I would say, like, the transfer portal has been interesting because, you know, it's almost a better perspective, right? Because you're getting background from sometimes three different schools on players now if they've gone through two or three schools at this point. So, you're getting perspectives. You're seeing how guys have grown and matured over their career, not just at one school. You know, if they've stayed with one staff, you're learning from multiple staffs that they've had at different stops. It really gives you a sense of who the player has become, not just as a player but as a person as they've gone. So, I think it makes it a little bit harder to gather the information. But our scouts do an unbelievable job. I mean, they're on the road 200 days a year digging this information up. That's what they do. So, we're fortunate we have a really good group so that by the time we're comfortable making a pick and adding a player to our roster, we feel like we really know that player. And it all starts with gathering that background and all the work that everybody upstairs does."

Did you know that Hall and Zinter had that ironic, weird connection before you drafted them both on day two?

"I mean, we're aware of some connections, but I would say we're really excited to have both guys as football players."

Did you know that he got shoved into?

"I've seen the play a lot. I can tell you about every play in that Ohio State - Michigan game. We've seen it probably 80 times as a group together at this point. So that's what we do from February through about a week ago. So, yeah, like I said, that's why I was like, did you guys challenge them to a steel cage deathmatch out here before we even started the day [joking]? So, yeah, both those guys obviously are super competitive players and played some pretty good football at a high level. So that'll be fun to watch that battle in practice for years to come as you guys get to watch them out there. I was not at that game. I was up there a year or two ago, but I was not at this."

How many? One scout?

"One or two might have been. I think this year is one. We want to say two last year."

I wanna question about development. This, this is the fifth straight year, I believe, that you guys have drafted a receiver. Two are no longer with the organization, so leaves you with three, including Thrash here. I realize when you're at this point in the draft, you're hoping to get lightning in the bottle. How do you feel about the young receiver development right now as far as where it's at? And is it a case where you guys are just trying to keep reinvesting in that particular position open to him?

"Yeah, that's a great question, too. I think just to answer the first part of your question, with developing receivers, I feel great. I think Chad O'Shea is one of the best receiver coaches in the league. I think we have a great player development crew here that does a lot behind the scenes to continue working with these guys. You know, with Jamari in particular, the thing that stands out to us is his ability to separate naturally, and he's kind of proven that at two different levels now and then through the spring in the all-star game circuit, as we mentioned. So the hard part about receiver in the NFL is developing, and that's why it is like a high turnover position is like there's sometimes two, three on the field at most, but it takes an opportunity sometimes, you know, it takes an injury for a guy to get on the field and show what they can really do. We've had plenty of guys through the years that look great in practice and then they have to show up and prove it. But you need those guys to be able to get to the field and be active to do it. So, I know somebody asked the special teams question. That's one way to get on the field and prove yourself. It's plenty - there's a history of guys in the league that started as special teams players and developed into good players and, you know, thinking through the back through the years here, even Rashard Higgins, you know, had a little bit of action as a rookie. You know, he was a guy we cut, put back on practice squad, brought him right back to the 53, and then it took him a year to really prove what he could do. So, you know, as an organization, I think we're in a great spot with player development and, you know, our job, again, is to provide depth and so that we can survive injuries over the course of the year. And when those guys get their opportunity to show what they can do they have one or two things in their skill set that allows them to succeed at our level."

I think it said that Zak had worked a little bit early in his Michigan career at center. Do you guys sort of envision him potentially, you know, some versatility there beyond just guard, you know, just even if it's just as, you know, an emergency possibility?

"Yeah, I would leave that one fully up to the coaches. I mean, the good thing about Zak is he's played multiple positions. He is super smart. He's a guy where you honestly feel like you can plug and play wherever and he's, you know, he's going to know exactly what to do. He's going to know the right angles on how to do it. He's going to take coaching very well and understand exactly what we're doing schematically. So long term roster-wise, those things bear

themselves out over time. Again, opportunity creates playtime, and we'll see how he does. But, you know, I think he fully fits our smart, tough, accountable mantra and will fit right into that room really early on."

D tackles. It just seems like you guys obviously come away with one, but in the NFL, the contracts that veterans are getting in free agency and that emphasis on D tackles you can get after opposing quarterbacks. How in recent years has that changed, like your evaluation of the position and how have you seen it kind of trickle down into college, maybe anything like that?

"Yeah, pass rush is a premium no matter what. I mean, we see the guys that hit the market this year even signed extensions recently at the D tackle position. It's a highly paid, highly coveted position. And taking a guy like Mike, very good quickness, twitch power, and has really the ideal skill set for what we're looking for out of a three-technique, when you see guys like that, they kind of jump off the tape. In college, a lot of college teams play odd fronts or play three guys where it's, you have more DBs than linebackers on the field. But a guy like Mike really was identified pretty early here as a guy that's a perfect scheme fit for us and fits what we do. And again, it is something that we're always looking to add wherever we can."

He had some real dominant stretches down there and maybe some inconsistency. What would you attribute that to?

"Inconsistency? Yeah, I would just say like, he's a guy that's going to come off the ball, so maybe it looks a little bit differently when, you know, the ball goes the other way or it gets out a gap, you know, maybe from where he was supposed to be on tape. I just think his strength is coming off the ball, it's disrupting. You guys have heard Jim's (Schwartz) phrases over and over, "That's what he does." And I just think even his inconsistent plays create opportunities for others, which is how we kind of view things when you're building your front seven. And we're fortunate that we have a couple pretty good D linemen around him with the ability to rectify some mistakes. When you got a guy that just gets up the field and disrupts and has power and plays fast. So that's what we want our guys to do."

Back to the development aspect. When you look at Jamari's games in the areas that he can grow, what can he learn from this current receiving core? Just with Amari (Cooper) and guys like Elijah (Moore) and them?

"Yeah. If I were Jamari, I would be watching and listening to every detail that those guys provide with route running. Like when you talk about the three guys you mentioned, they're all very quality route runners. They all have the ability to play inside and out just like we view Jamari as. So, you know, route running in the NFL versus a high amount of press coverage takes, again, the receiver curve. It takes a little time for these guys to figure that out. His athletic skillset and what he's proven throughout his college career is already up to par, if you will. And then it's up to him to learn the nuances, learn those smaller things and really probably learn to study tape and listen to how these guys see the game because that's a pretty smart receiver group. And guys, one of the best things about that group, we always joke about how we have a pretty boring receiver group here and it's because those guys, they're pros. They all pull for each other, they all root for each other and they all learn from each other. And guys have come from different buildings too, so they've gathered a lot along the way."

Receiver class that appears as deep as this one is. What are the challenges with that? Like, do you group guys by. Okay, these guys are whatever by style, I guess, when you're breaking down and decide who you gonna wind up picking?

"Yeah, that's an interesting question because we build our board a certain way, but I would say in general we're looking for guys that can separate, get open, catch the ball and run after the catch. That's kind of how we view things in general. Receiver, corner(back) is another position in the league where like guys come in all different shapes and sizes and have, you know, maybe highs or lows here and some of that is size. But again, you know, the league's trending to a lot of eleven personnel. You're going to play with three receivers most of the game. So we put a premium on guys that we believe can separate and catch the ball, which, you know, Jamari's proven he can do it at a high level."

So, who spends his year studying these guys and years in some cases? Are you ready to have a first-round pick?

"Yeah, I'm looking forward to that, actually. It'll be a lot more exciting probably down here as well, so. But I mean, in general, it's funny, I remember being asked this question last year and all we do is really shift our board and just shift the players that you're focused on. So, it's like if you're taking a receiver later, you're still as excited about him sometimes or a player being there in the fifth round, sixth round as you would be getting, quote-unquote, getting your guy in the first. So, the two guys that we added yesterday, were very excited, you know, that it ended up working out and were able to add them to the roster. So, I would say there's like no shortage of excitement when we're able to do that. But again, a first-round pick is a huge resource and as we've seen the last couple years, those can go a lot of different ways. And, you know, we deploy our resources in a lot of different directions. I would say so. But, yeah, it'd be nice to have that resource back. Looking forward to it."

Jamari played part of the end of the, or like most of the end of the season with a broken hand. Could you see that difference on film when you were watching it? I mean, what does it tell you about a guy who wants to play through that and stay on the field?

"Yeah, I mean, receivers that play through stuff like that and your job is catching the ball. I think it just, again, proves the makeup of who the kid is. So, you know, tough, competitive, and smart is what we're looking for in every position. I think he fits all that. And just one more example of how he proves it."

Do you have any concerns about any drop issues with him?

"No. Our scouts do a really good job of providing that context and, you know, we have a number of different lenses. We look at, you know, drop rate stats, all those things, and we really try to contextualize things the best we can and really go over the player's whole career, not just one small sample of his four- or five-years playing college football."

I think you had a few different visits with (Troy) Franklin counting the (NFL) Combine and he came here. Are you surprised he went so low?

"I mean, we enjoyed our time with Troy, too. You know, wish him the best of luck where he ends up. I would say again, everybody's board is very different. And, you know, where you're choosing players in the drafts, you're kind of - for us, we're looking at bundles of players and the availability to get players that we like at different positions across, you know, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth whatever round it might be. So. But, yeah, I mean, good player and wish him the best going forward. There are a lot of guys we spend time with through the process that you're excited to see how they end up because you had great experiences with them and want to see how they do. All right, thanks, everybody."

WR Jamari Thrash
Fifth Round 2024 NFL Draft
4-27-24

Hey, Jamari, obviously, you started your career at Georgia State and played four years there, but what did you get out of that one year playing in the ACC at Louisville that you feel like you weren't able to really get during that time at Georgia State that helped you prepare you for now, this next step?

"Just being in Coach (Jeff) Brohm's offense, knowing that he runs a poster offense, and I knew that he was going to get me those. I don't want to say a leg up, but he was going to give me opportunity to learn NFL offenses. You know, going to the ACC, I was able to go against ACC defenses. Well, they were ACC defenses that were NFL defenses. So just being in the ACC and going against different competition and playing with Brohm, you know, it also helped me a lot to mature and pick up on a lot of things getting into this, well, actually heading into my NFL career."

Hey, Jamari, congratulations. What is your reaction to getting picked by the Browns, and did you think there would be a fit there? Did you have any kind of contact with them before the draft that made you think it would be a possibility?

"Yeah, so I actually met with them at the combine. You know, they ran me through a couple tests. You know, they got to know me as a player and a character. So I actually kind of, you know, what's so crazy? Actually kind of, I was going, I knew they were going to pick me, but I looked at the last, like, the upcoming four picks, and I was like, okay. Like, I know I talked to the Browns a lot. So, you know, I was just waiting on, we'll see which team was going to grab me. But, man, I'm blessed and honored to be a Cleveland Brown. You know, it means a lot to me right now."

Hey, Jamari, what was this weekend like for you? Where were you? Who were you with and what were the emotions like?

"I was just around my family, friends, and people I grew up with. You know, it got kind of shaky for me. I just kept, one round went by, and then I was just kind of getting nervous. I couldn't be still. So as I know I'm nervous, I can't be still. You know, it was a great feeling."

Hey, Jamari, looking at the roster and the receivers that are currently in Cleveland, is there someone that you're looking forward to kind of picking their brain and trying to grow your game being around them?

"All of them. You know, I know they just recently got (Jerry) Jeudy. Amari (Cooper) who's been there. Elijah Moore's been there, James Proche. You know, I'm just ready to, you know, working, you know, learn what I can learn from those guys. So, you know, I'm really excited about the future."

Jamari, it doesn't look like you have a bunch of special teams on your resume. Is that something that you think you can do in the pros? And have you done much of it at all?

"Yeah, so actually, when I went to Louisville, you know, I was a gunner. I was a gunner, you know, I played punt return in high school. I did it a little bit in college, but, I never got my opportunity to do it in the game. But that's my background when it comes to special teams so. But, yeah, special teams is something that I'm definitely willing to do. That's something. It doesn't matter if I'm willing to do it or not. You know, I don't have a choice, but, yeah, that's my whole mindset when it comes to it. Well, yeah, special teams, you know, I don't mind doing special teams."

Jamari, if you were to write out your own scouting report on yourself, what would it say?

"Playmaker, good with the ball in his hand, creates, you know, separation. I mean, I feel like my tape just speaks for itself."

Congratulations, Jamari. In your conversation just with the Browns at the combine, just what were some of the things you picked up on, learned about and liked with the offense that they're trying to run next season?

"Just saying how to use their receivers. Just saying, you know, seeing how versatile they let their receivers be because, you know, they showed me a couple formations and, you know, film, you know, Amari Cooper being wide to the left and also in the slot as well. So just seeing how they use their receivers, their concepts and, you know, just play style."

Hi, Jamari. Ashley Bastock from cleveland.com. I know you're excited to pick everyone's brain in that receiver room, it sounds like, but I've read you get praised for your route running. I'm wondering with Amari Cooper specifically, since he's regarded as one of the best route runners in the league, how excited are you to get to talk that aspect of the game with him?

"Man, I can't wait. Amari's doing a good job. You know, he's always been consistent. You know, he was one of my favorite receivers when he was at Bama as well, so just being in that room with him and Jeudy and Elijah Moore, you know, just being in the room with those guys, I know I can just learn a lot. I can't wait. I can't wait to get into that room with those guys."

Hey, Jamari, I saw that you had a hand injury, and had surgery. You played through it. How did that affect you in the second half of the season? And, you know, why was it so important for you to stay on the field?

"You know, it kind of slowed me up, you know, trying to get back used to, you know, I don't want to say one hand, but trying to get straight back in. You know, the hand I had surgery on, it definitely slowed me down a little bit toward the second half of the season, but I always just want to, you know, so just knowing what we had to do and seeing where we at in the standards, I knew that, you know, going to the ACC Championship was something that was big for us, you know, coming in next January coming in, yeah, coming in that January, so that was something that was big for us, and I know what type of player I am and type of teammate that I am, so I didn't mind playing with a broken hand or a broken wrist or a broken finger. Like, just knowing me as a player and just knowing that my team needs me on the field each game really just did a lot to me. So just knowing that they needed me, I don't mind going all out for my teammates."

Area Scout Matt Donahoe
4-27-24

Specifically, with (Nathaniel) Watson, what was the singular trait that really kind of drew you most to him?

"I think with him, his just toughness and intelligence. He's been a very productive player at Mississippi State throughout his career. He's one of the smarter guys they had on their defense. A lot was required out of him. [The] reviews on him were good the last couple of years going in there. So I think when you get a guy that's tough, physical, loves the game of football, I think that's a great guy to add to the program here."

Nathaniel had a lot of experience on special teams. How do you see that skillset fitting in on the next level, especially with new kickoff rules and whatnot?

"Nice thing about Watson is, he's a bigger build for linebacker. A lot of times now you're seeing those undersized linebackers in college just with the way the game's going. I think with him he's had experience. He's a tough kid. He's got length, he's got strength. I think he actually runs pretty well for his size as well. So I think all those - just the combination of his entire package, I think will make a good transition to play [special] teams at the next level."

He lasted 206 picks. Why would he be around so long?

"That's a good question. I don't know. You might have to ask some other teams, but I think when you get a guy at that price, I think you're just happy to add him to your team. And I think that's where we were comfortable with and he was still on the board and I think we made the decision that it's best for the Cleveland Browns to add him at that time. But as far as why he lasted so long, I can't really put my thumb on that."

Yesterday, there was that run of D tackles. You guys obviously come away with one, but it just seems like this interesting shift in a position and how free agency is going and the contracts those guys are getting. So how overall in recent years has that maybe shifted your evaluation of these college kids and how has that maybe trickled down into the college game? The pass rushing element of D tackles now especially?

"Yeah, I think it's just like you said, you see it every year just when the runs start going. I don't think it really changes either myself or any of the scouts way of kind of going about things just because we're required for our schools and the senior Draft-eligible players at every program we go to. So I don't

know if it really changes kind of how we either grade or value guys just because we're kind of grading as what we think, you know, what their value is to the Cleveland Browns. But again, obviously, you know, pass rushers, interior d tackles that can rush, all those are probably valued more just because it's hard to find those guys more. But I don't think it really changes kind of the process of kind of how we look at things."

Was he mostly at MIKE at Mississippi State?

"He was very versatile in their defense. So I think that's another thing to why it's a good value to bring in a guy like that just because, like I said, he was probably, if not one or if not the, one of the smartest guys on their defense. Like I said, they required a lot. He had to learn one of their linebacker positions in the parking lot before one of their games because one of their other kids was, I think, under the weather - I forget the exact detail, but they lost one of their other linebackers. So I think that goes a long way at the next level. Being able to play multiple spots and being versatile in that regard."

How much stock do you put in an NFL pedigree? I see he has a couple uncles who were in the league for a while, and just to follow up on the second part is how did he check out from a character standpoint with a couple of arrests on his background?

"Obviously, it's always great if they have a background of people in their family that played at least you know they kind of come from an athletic background, so I don't think that ever hurts. As far as the character thing. I mean, guys make mistakes. I mean, no one's perfect. I think the nice part about that is, or at least with him, is going in there for a couple of years, you kind of get to know the whole background about the kid. So probably going on two, three years now, you kind of hear different stories, different ways he goes about things, what type of leader he is, type of character he's got. And then even through the spring process here, seeing him at all-star games, you get comfortable enough with them. Like I said, I don't think anyone's perfect in any regard, but I think at the end of the day, we felt comfortable that this kid is a country kid who loves to play the game of football, and he's tough and smart, and I think those things go a long way."

Mississippi State played a very unique, or they had played while he was there, a very unique scheme with that three, three stack that they run. How does that translate? I mean, you were watching a guy in a scheme that is as unique as that. How do you project that into, I know defenses are multiple at this level, but do you try to project a player when they're coming from a scheme like that?

"Yeah, I mean, you always, whatever position or player, you obviously want to project them to the team, at least the Browns in this case, the team that he's going to. So I think the good thing about him playing in a defense like that, I think he was asked to do a lot. So I think, like I said, at least with the linebacker position, the intelligence stuff is very important. I think that guys that are smarter, I think, have a tendency to play the game faster. And like I said, he's played multiple spots. He's been asked a lot of him. So I think, like, the versatility is only going to help him at this level. If he's going to start off at one spot now, the coaches will decide where's best for that, but I think the fact that he can play multiple spots and is intelligent enough to do so, I think that's only going to help him."

As a player who was in college for six years, he's going to be 24 in September. Is he pretty close to his final form as a football player or is there still a lot of room for development?

"I think there's always room to develop. Whether you're talking about football players or just people in general, I think there's always room to grow in that regard. I think it's helped him that he's played a lot of football and he's been productive in the SEC. I mean, he's made a lot of tackles throughout his career, so he knows how to play the game of football. He's made a lot of plays and I think those things should translate pretty easily for him to the next level. And he's played special teams as well through college, so he's done a lot throughout. I know he's been there a while, but he's done a lot throughout his career."

Do you get excited to see some of these guys and hoping that they turn into gems throughout the development as well but hoping that you might really land on someone in this part of the draft?

"Yeah, it's always nice, too. I mean, ideally, you'd want to hit on every pick and hopefully become great players in the league. But yeah, I mean, it's nice just because you spend so much time watching these guys and spending time getting to know them, getting characters, so you always kind of have a soft spot for your own guys, but when it comes down to it, as long as they're helping out the Cleveland Browns, I think that's the best thing. But yeah and if you ask any of our scouts, probably we all have our favorites that we hope, you know, end up in Cleveland but doesn't always happen. But that's just the way it goes. But, you know, as long as they become a good, productive Cleveland Brown and they help our team, I think that's what's best in the end."

And on the special teams that he played in college, how much of that factor is your guys interest in him? And also, just as you kind of evaluate the new kickoff situation?

"Especially a linebacker position, you obviously want those guys to play just because they're bigger bodies and you hope they can play, you know, all phases. I think it's just part of the process, really. It depends really by guy. But the nice thing is that he was a productive starter on their defense, and

he also had played special teams throughout his career. So, you kind of get the best of both worlds in his regard, but you'll see guys every year that are kind of just mainly special teams players that make a career out of being special teams players. But like I said, I just keep going back. Kind of just the versatility of Watson is one of the more impressive parts of his kind of whole package."

How much impact did that new kickoff rule for you as scouts as your kind of trying to provide Andrew (Berry) with, you know, players now, but just they threw such a significant change to, you know, a major play. Just what type of challenge does that present for you as a scout and how much did that, you know, impact what you do?

"Well, I think it's going to be something that's going to, we're going to continue to have to understand more, really, just because it's so new and that was kind of thrown on to us, I guess, after kind of the college season, too. But again, if you have good athletes, you got big bodies, you got strong guys, you know, those guys probably will translate on to special teams regardless of what the rules are. But I think that's kind of going to be an ongoing process of just kind of getting a feel for what type of guys we want playing on those units. So, I think it's almost too new to really give a definite answer to that."

Executive Vice President, Football Operations & General Manager, Andrew Berry and Head Coach Kevin Stefanski

4-27-24

Opening statement:

Andrew Berry: "All right, well, it looks like at least half of you hung around to the end of the 7th round, huh? All right, so as we wrap up Draft weekend, very excited with the group of players that were able to select this weekend. You know, all of them have aspects that made us excited about them as prospects and also as people. Our scouts, our coaches, they've been hard at work for the last little bit, signing undrafted free agents, something that's been really fruitful for us over the past couple years, but particularly last year with Ronnie Hickman and Mohamoud (Diabate). So it's an important part of what we do, and our job's not done yet, but we like the young players that we've added to the team. We're looking forward to seeing them integrate with the veterans as we get into May. And with that, I'll open it up for questions."

A couple of the guys today that maybe we could start with, (Jamari) Thrash. What did you like so much about Jamari?

Berry: "Yeah, so, you know, Jamari, we liked his route skill and his separation ability. You know, this is a guy that both was very productive at Georgia State and then transferring up to Louisville, really answered the bell there and then really, even through the Senior Bowl in January. We view him as a guy who can play outside and inside. You know, he's good with the ball in his hands. So as we think through our offense and our fit within that receiver room, we're looking forward to seeing him compete for reps, and we think he's a guy that has position flex."

Can you go into depth on drafting (Nathaniel) Watson? What did you like about him?

Berry: "Yeah. So with Nathaniel, one of the things that we thought a lot about when we lost Sione (Takitaki) in free agency this spring, one of the things that he was able to add when he played both MIKE and SAM is a little bit more stoutness in the middle of the defense, particularly at the point of attack. And we think that Nathaniel, he's got good range, he's incredibly smart, and he has good instincts, but he provides maybe a little bit of a diverse profile in that linebacker room because he does have a little bit more strength and power at the point of attack. So we see him as a player that has the potential to maybe develop into that type of role. MIKE, SAM, FLEX and ultimately be someone who's a candidate to call the defense after he gets his sea legs out from under him."

As you got later into the - especially those last three picks, how much are you guys sort of looking, special teams looking at, especially with the changes that you're going to deal with the new kickoff rule, how they could fit in there?

Berry: "That's a great question, Chris (Easterling). That was actually a big part of the discussions with a number of the prospects that we talked about and debated and, you know, some went off the board at different points, but it was a big part of the discussions with, you know, as we thought kind of through the whole, you know, big picture profile of an individual player. So definitely part of it."

Are you comfortable with Watson's off-field stuff and do you think that's why he was still available in the 6th round?

Berry: "Yeah, I can't comment on why, you know - how other teams viewed him, but, you know, we are comfortable with the person, yes."

I guess I wonder how long has he been on your guys' radar? Because he was in school for six years. So you've done work on him in previous drafts?

Berry: "Yeah, I would say he's probably been on our radar as much as any prospect in this class. I wouldn't say that it was anything, you know, too far off the norm in that regard."

It was rare for you to have a draft where you just kind of stayed put and made your pick. Is there something different about this draft?

Berry: "It wasn't for a lack of effort, I can assure you, Dan (Labbe). Yeah, we were talking about that as we were coming downstairs. Like, man, this is the first draft that we haven't executed a trade. I blame it on Kwesi (Adofo-Mensah), and you can quote me on that because Kevin (Stefanski) was joking. He's like, 'I've never heard two people talk more about trades involving 7th round picks than the two of you and not get a deal done.' But we had a number of opportunities where we were either trying to move around today and like we talked about yesterday, we had a couple opportunities, but it just didn't make sense for whatever reason. But I would not say that's going to be the new M.O."

I think this is the fifth straight year you've drafted a wide receiver. Is that just a coincidence or is that kind of just a byproduct of the first two guys that you did draft not being here?

Berry: "Yeah, I think it's probably a little bit more coincidence. I mean, I think you see more, you know, that's going to be one of the more plentiful positions in terms of just overall quantity year over year. And then also, just like as you think about different positions and where you select them. Like, I don't - I wouldn't, I wouldn't read too much into that, Daryl (Ruiter)."

It seems like you guys are building bridges between Ohio State and Michigan. I know you spent some time with Mike (Hall Jr.) and with Zak (Zinter). What was it like to see them together today and just the general impressions on that?

Berry: "No, it was. It was great. I mean, I think those two guys are going to add a lot to our locker room in different ways. You know, I think Mike with just his passion and his energy, and I think Zak's kind of just the steady, you know, steady presence. But I'm looking forward to seeing those two battle it out on the practice field, you know, once we get the pads on and they're both looking forward to being teammates."

Cross trained a little bit at center. Is that maybe down the line you guys look around with them?

Berry: "Yeah. You know, very rarely will we bring a lineman in and have them work at one spot. Especially young players. We want them to have positional flexibility and Zak's incredibly smart and someone that we expect to be able to handle load of multiple spots."

When you look at that tight end room, was that a position where you considered guys during this draft? And I guess I know there's a lot of time left in the off season, but how do you think it kind of stacks up right now? Do you feel like maybe your guy short?

Berry: "I'd say in any room, we don't feel like we're done. The first game isn't until Labor Day weekend or after Labor Day weekend. So we've got a long way to go. We can probably maybe catch our breath for a day. But I think we talked about before the Draft, you know, Za'Darius (Smith), we traded for on a Friday night in the middle of May. Shelby (Harris), we signed what, early August? And we traded for Pierre (Strong Jr.) and Dustin (Hopkins), you know, at the end of camp. So there's still work to do in the roster and that's not just limited to the tight end room, but, you know, that's what the next couple months are for."

Is there a spot you came into the weekend going, we'd really like to address that spot?

Berry: "What do I typically say before the Draft in terms of the Draft [laughter]?"

We are at the end of the Deshaun Watson trade, the last pick was made by Houston. Just wondering, what do you think about that now knowing that's kind of behind you in some respects and you'll have a first round pick next year, can you sort of wrap up where how you feel about the whole thing right now?

Berry: "I'll be honest in truth, Mary Kay (Cabot), I haven't thought about it that way or like spend any time reflecting on it. I really just look at it as, 'Hey, here are resources in a given year. How do we best apply them to the team to make it better in the short and long term?' So that's not something I really think about."

How much are you looking forward to having something to do on Thursday night next year?

Berry: "For now, no. It'll be great to have kind of our full complement of Draft picks back for sure. How we deploy them, we'll see over the next year."

Could you speak to the developmental aspect? The bulk of this draft here seems to be about bringing in some young guys that maybe not immediately are going to have an impact, maybe hope one or two of them can, but down the road they will. Just how you get these guys in here.

Kevin Stefanski: "Here, sure, we look at it, these are not finished products. Some of them are very young. Obviously, Mike (Hall Jr.) is 20 years old. So these guys, these people are developing off the field. Obviously, we're going to spend a lot of time with them on the field to develop them and their skill set. But that's a huge, we talked about it yesterday. That's a huge part of our job as coaches is to get as much out of these players as we can, and we're eager to get to work with them in a couple weeks."

How excited do you get when you have a new draft class and you'll see them on the field here in just a couple weeks?

Stefanski: "Yeah, that's the thing. Seeing them on the grass is what's most exciting, you know, bringing them in here and it's a long, arduous process. And AB (Andrew Berry) and his crew did a great job and it's so organized and really they stayed true to really, the process, if you will. Then when we get them on the grass, that's the fun part for the coaches where we can take them through an individual drill and start to acclimate them to our schemes."

Last week you talked about potentially with the new kickoff rules, the size of coverage, players maybe looking for some different things. Did Watson's size play a big factor in determining his value on special?

Berry: "That's a great question. Observation, his style of play did. I think it's something for us. When we went through the process, we thought he could fill this or potentially fill this specialized role at linebacker, but we also thought he could be a multi-phase producer on special teams, specifically with the new kickoff rule. As we talked about before the Draft, probably none of us really know how it's going to look and operate but it certainly is a speculative play on our part that we think that's something that he could be good at."

Thrash, who it sounds like he hasn't played a ton of special teams, and that obviously becomes such an important part for rookies. How do you go about evaluating a guy like that?

Berry: "Truthfully, with receivers, unless they're returners, they're typically not, like, highly involved in special teams. Or, like, I should, maybe I should say it differently. They're not highly impactful, like, multi-faceted producers just because of what's required. So I think guys that do that are a little bit more the exception to the rule, but we always tell our guys, like, hey, if you're not, you know, if you're not Amari Cooper, like, you've got to be able to do more to be active on game day. So that'll certainly be, you know, not just a challenge to Jamari but really all of our young guys who probably for a lot of their careers have not played special teams, and this will really be the first time."

How do you approach, I know you're not going to give names right now, but as you try to approach that UDFA class, what's kind of your method? What are you looking for as you kind of piece that together?

Berry: "So the way we look at it is any player that we add to the roster, they should have some clear strength, even if it's very narrow. You know, are they someone who is really fast or really strong or someone who can rush the pass or someone who's really good in the run game? You know, there should be some type of clear strength for why they're here. Because once we get to September and we're putting the team together, as you talk about, call it, spots 40 through 53, it really is a puzzle piece. You're trying to complement your starters and your primary players with skill sets that you may lack in certain areas. So when we go to the undrafted free agent process, we're looking for guys with strengths, and probably by definition, those guys are maybe a little bit more limited coming in, but it's like, 'Hey, does this guy have size? Can he run?' Or if we have a certain profile at the position, we're looking for the most important traits. So maybe a perfect example would be, you know, Ronnie Hickman last year. We thought this was a guy who was athletic, who could run and had great ball skills. So we're like, hey, this is a guy who could be a developmental-free safety for us. And Ronnie came along even more quickly than we anticipated, but those strengths were something that we felt would complement our room."

Did you want to fit that bill a little bit, too? Because I thought I saw you was on that freaks list. Was there something specifically about his traits that jumped out of you guys?

Berry: "Yeah, with Jowon, we really thought that his, it's maybe a little bit like what we talked about with Michael yesterday, where his strength, he's kind of like a move style defensive tackle. And for us, as we get into the later rounds or we get into the undrafted free agent pool, you'll see us choose or select or sign guys that are more that profile because of what we ask our defensive line to do in this scheme."

Go a little into Myles Harden?

Berry: "Yeah. So, you know, Myles is a small school corner who we thought actually has a pretty well-rounded skill set. I think he probably has maybe a little bit more from our perspective, you know, a nickel profile with even maybe some potential to flex at safety, but really smart kid, was productive, you know, out of South Dakota, you know, good enough tools for the position. And I think, as you know, Nate, you know, corner will always be a premium spot for us for defense to offense. "

Did it just kind of turn out that way? You didn't go into the draft thinking that you needed to go heavy defense?

Berry: "Yeah, it just kind of, and I'll be honest, like, probably going to the draft, if you would have asked me how it would have shaped out, it probably would have been the other way, just because of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the draft class. So, it's just another reminder to us that you just have to stay flexible and adaptable with what the board throws at you. But we're excited about the group of young men that we've added."

I know how you're going to answer this, but have you made a decision on Greg's fifth-year option?

Berry: "Very happy with Greg. Want as many man corners as we can have, and we'll let you guys know when at the appropriate time."

Earlier, you were talking about traits. Last year, you were talking about horses and horses running really well. Is there something off the top of your head, like, in this draft class, this guy does x really well, and that stands out above the rest?

Berry: "Yeah, that's actually a really great question. I think probably the easy one is Mike, just because his ability as a rusher, just both with his physical tools and feel, it's something that we put a premium value on. But, you know, I really could go down the list. Like, you know, Zak, we think is, you know, his superpower is he's an excellent pass protector. Jamari he's an outstanding separator. You know Nathaniel, you know, he's really good in the run game, particularly using his strength. You know, Myles is probably a little bit his, you know, his instincts and versatility. And then Jowon, it's his. It's his movement ability. So that's not to say that all those individuals are isolated to that primary feature, but it's certainly something that made them attractive to us."

I'm curious if in the fifth round, was there a little brotherly instinct in play when the Eagles came up? And jumped you guys to try to get Jeremiah Trotter Jr.

Berry: "No, there wasn't. I'd like to say there was a better story to that, but no, there wasn't. There wasn't."

It's one thing to rebuild a roster. It's another to kind of get the wheel of talent flowing, so to speak, where you can cultivate your own to compensate for any losses. Do you feel that now you're as deep as you are into this, that you've gotten to that stage in roster building where you feel like that wheel is starting to naturally turn for you as opposed to, you're constantly filling holes and things like that?

Berry: "Truthfully, I do, Daryl, I certainly hope so. But we feel good about the health and depth of the roster. We won't know until we get to the fall because, as I say, every year guys surprise you in both directions, and things change fast in the NFL, you know, as we see. So, as we sit here today, though, we're happy with where we stand. We're not satisfied, and we know that we still have work to do and areas to bolster and supplement, but we do feel good about the health as we stand today."

Perhaps a quarterback may be an undrafted or somewhere that you guys could bring in here because it seems like you might need another arm or a developmental player with what's going on with Deshaun (Watson) and Dorian (Thompson-Robinson)?

Berry: "I'd say that's unlikely. Yeah."

No draft is perfect. Did you guys accomplish what you guys wanted to accomplish this weekend and maximize those late-round picks?

Berry: "I'd say so, number one. I mean, I don't know that any. Everyone's going to say they accomplished what they intended to accomplish, but the truth is none of us actually know. All we can say is we tried to make the best decisions that were at the moment that they were placed in front of us. I think we had some goals in terms of pick management or resource management that weren't afforded or weren't afforded the right opportunity to execute on. But that being said, we're happy with the group of players that we're bringing in."