



ANOTHER SIDE OF THE DRAFT

Sure, everybody knows that USC running back **REGGIE BUSH** went to high school with **ALEX SMITH**, last year's No. 1 NFL Draft selection. Or that Trojans quarterback **MATT LEINART** pals around with **NICK LACHEY**. Or that the mentor of Texas quarterback **VINCE YOUNG** is **STEVE MC NAIR**.

If you follow football, you know that these three are the headliners of this Saturday and Sunday's NFL Draft at Radio City Music Hall in New York City. Even Texas Governor **RICK PERRY** calls them the "top three football players in America."

There are a lot of college players eligible for the draft who might debate the governor on that. Both on and off the field. Hey, the **JAY CUTLERS**, **A.J. HAWKS** and **MATHIAS KIWANUKA**s of the world have interesting personal stories too!

Some of the interesting notes on the class of '06:

PROUD OF HIS GRANDFATHER: He never knew him, but he learned a lot about him when he went to his ancestral home of Uganda. The grandfather of Boston College defensive end **MATHIAS KIWANUKA – BENEDICTO KIWANUKA** – in 1961 became the first elected prime minister in Ugandan history. Eleven years later, he was assassinated by Idi Amin's henchmen. When Mathias was a third-grader, his parents took the whole family to its homeland. They were treated like dignitaries.

"People came up to me and said, 'I really respected your grandfather,'" says Mathias. "He was a guy people appreciated for his honesty and how genuine he was. If you can change one person's life so dramatically that a couple of decades later they still remember you as his grandchild and come up and shake your hand, that's something that is unmatched."

FROM "THE THORN BIRDS" TO THE CAVALIERS: It's pronounced "da-BRICK-a-shore," and you have to go back to one of television's first miniseries to discover its origin.

Virginia tackle **D'BRICKASHAW FERGUSON** sure has an unusual first name. And while it is not exactly the same name as the main character in "The Thorn Birds" that actor **RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN** played in the hit 1983 TV miniseries – father Ralph de Bricassart – it is close. **RHUNETTE** and **EDWIN FERGUSON** liked the sound of the name enough to use an adaptation of it for their son who was born eight months after the series debuted.

"The Thorn Birds" – depicting a tormented priest who has to decide between his faith and love for a woman named Meggie Cleary (played by **RACHEL WARD**) – earned a 41 rating and amazing 59 share.

D'Brickashaw has seen the series. "It's a pretty good movie," he says. "I had to see it because I wanted to find out where my name came from."

"It's a great icebreaker," says Virginia offensive coordinator **RON PRINCE**. "Who will ever forget a name like 'D'Brickashaw'?"

EVERY DAY WAS CHRISTMAS!: It sure seemed like that in the hometown of Vanderbilt quarterback **JAY CUTLER**.

He comes from Santa Claus, Indiana, a city of about 2,000 people located 179 miles south of Indianapolis.

Santa Claus is the only town in the world with a post office by that name. According to legend, this small community, originally founded by German immigrants in the late 1840s, got its name on Christmas Eve of 1852.

The local residents and leaders had been struggling to come up with an acceptable name for the town. Most of the community was present at a church for the last town meeting of the year, held on Christmas Eve, at which a name would be chosen. Suddenly – according to the legend – the wind blew the doors open and "mysterious" sleigh bells were heard outside. The children yelled excitedly, "It's Santa Claus!" Thus, Jay Cutler's hometown was named.

Early Christmas present? This Saturday – draft day – is Cutler's birthday. He will be 23.

EXCELLING ACADEMICALLY: The draft class of '06 includes many players who have made the term "student-athlete" ring true.

Many of the players who will be selected for the NFL have either already received their degrees (and in some cases are pursuing their master's) or will graduate this spring.

One is Alabama linebacker **DE MECO RYANS**, who has graduated cum laude with a degree in business management with a 3.5 GPA and academic All-America honors. In addition to his studies, DeMeco last year helped initiate a Hurricane Katrina fund-raising effort among his teammates that raised nearly \$5,000. Then he arranged for 17 players to spend last Labor Day working at the Alabama student center where hurricane evacuees were housed.

"I take a lot of pride in academics," says Ryan. "It means everything to me because I know football isn't going to last forever. You have to have a degree to fall back on. Anything I receive with academics, that shows what the real college athlete is about, being a scholar and an athlete."

Ten draft-eligible players with high marks:

GOOD GRADES

Player	School	Major
QB Brett Basanez	Northwestern	Graduated with degree in communication studies and minor in business institutions; pursuing master's in communication studies.
T Rashad Butler	Miami	Graduated with degree in sociology; pursuing second degree in sports administration.
TE Anthony Fasano	Notre Dame	Will graduate with degree in marketing.
T D'Brickshaw Ferguson	Virginia	Graduated with degree in religious studies.
DE Eric Henderson	Georgia Tech	Graduated with degree in business management.
CB Kelly Jennings	Miami	Graduated with degree in finance; pursuing second degree in business management.
DE Mathias Kiwanuka	Boston College	Graduated with degree in psychology; pursuing master's in English.
QB Matt Leinart	USC	Graduated with degree in sociology.
LB Kai Parham	Virginia	Graduated with degree in African-American studies.
LB DeMeco Ryans	Alabama	Graduated cum laude with degree in business management.

A SLAP OF REALITY: It happens to everyone. Even those who have attained much at a young age. So North Carolina State defensive end **MARIO WILLIAMS** is ready for "reality" now.

After a career in which his high school (Richlands, North Carolina) retired his number (82) and his Wolfpack team voted him MVP this season, Mario knows things are about to change.

"I really have to face the fact that I'm leaving a great family here," he says of his college teammates. "I'm going to be in the real world now."

A.J.'s RULES: It is an understatement to say that Ohio State linebacker **A.J. HAWK** is unbending in his dedication not to be seen as better than anyone else. His family, his friends, and his teammates and coaches have experienced that Hawk "I'm-the-same-as-everybody" philosophy many a time.

Five of A.J.'s rules:

- Instructed his parents not to cheer for him in high school (Centerville, Ohio), although they could clap for team touchdowns.
- Never wore his high school varsity jackets. Did not want to seem "big time."
- Refused to let Buckeye photographers take a new media guide head-and-shoulders of him after his freshman year because he did not want to give up precious rest time between two-a-day August practices. Photos don't matter!
- Requested that an inch be taken off his Ohio State roster height (from 6-2 to 6-1). "I don't ever want to meet somebody and they go, 'You're not as tall as I thought you'd be,'" he told his father **KEITH**.
- On Senior Day, he was the only Buckeye to greet his parents with his helmet on. That was the rule in high school – helmets stay on!

"He doesn't like anything false," says his father. "Nothing false. He wants it all to be better. He wants to give something better than anyone expects."

BIG OAK HAD A BIG EFFECT: Growing up in an orphanage can have a big effect on you. Especially when your father owns it.

That was how Alabama quarterback **BRODIE CROYLE** grew up. His father – former Alabama defensive end **JOHN CROYLE**, who played under **BEAR BRYANT** – founded the Big Oak Ranch, an orphanage for boys in Rainbow City, Alabama, in 1974. Brodie grew up at the orphanage, and learned to appreciate the life he had.

“Growing up there made me anything and everything I am today,” he says. “The kids who come to the ranch, you could see the hatred in their eyes. And to see them become good people and really love life and realize bad things are going to happen but you can overlook them – I wouldn’t trade that for the world.”

That upbringing made Brodie realize how important family is, how important loyalty is. His father takes almost a two-hour round-trip every Friday to Tuscaloosa to have breakfast with his son. “He’s my best friend,” says Brodie.

RUNNIN’ IN MEMPHIS: As a junior, Memphis running back **DE ANGELO WILLIAMS** led the nation in rushing touchdowns. Time to declare for the draft? Not when you love your school even if it’s outside your home state of Arkansas!

Memphis is only 50 miles from DeAngelo’s hometown of Wayne, Arkansas (8,500 population), and he knew and liked the southwestern Tennessee city. So spending his senior year there was a no-brainer.

“I knew I’d be better served playing one more year here,” says Williams, who will graduate this June with a marketing degree. “I love being in college. I love it here in Memphis, and I wanted to stick around one more year.” That decision paid off on the field. Williams this year set a school and USA Conference season rushing record (1,964 yards).

ALASKA TO THE “OUTSIDE”: Since only nine players born or reared in Alaska since 1970 have played in the NFL, it would be something indeed if two made it in the same year.

That is the possibility in 2006 as guards **DARYN COLLEDGE** of Boise State and the North Pole and **CHRIS KUPER** of North Dakota and Anchorage are solid draft prospects. Both have the possibility of continuing their careers after going “outside,” as the locals call everywhere outside of Alaska.

Colledge and Kuper know they have a lot of backing – an entire state, actually. “It puts a little more pride on it,” says Colledge. “You need to put forth a little more effort because the whole state is watching. You don’t have 900 guys coming out of your cities or state. You have two guys. The whole state is watching us.”

Alaskans in the NFL (since 1970):

NORTH TO THE NFL

Alaskan Player	NFL Team(s), Years	Alaskan Hometown
DE Bob Rozier	Phoenix, 1979	Anchorage
RB Rocky Klever	NY Jets, 1983-87	Anchorage
G Tom Neville	Green Bay-SF, 1986-88, 1991-92	Salcha
CB Sammy Lilly	Phila.-San Diego-LA Rams, 1989-92	Anchorage
G Mark Schlereth	Washington-Denver, 1989-00	Anchorage
DL Shane Bonham	Detroit-SF-Indianapolis, 1994-99	Fairbanks
DE Travis Hall	Atlanta-SF, 1995-present	Anchorage
S Reggie Tongue	Kansas City-Seattle-NY Jets-Oakland, 1996-present	Fairbanks
DT Mao Tosi	Arizona, 2000-01	Anchorage

GREENWAY DID IT HIS WAY: He is one of the top-rated linebackers in the nation. But **CHAD GREENWAY** of Iowa took an unusual route to reach that level.

...as in *nine-man* football. That’s what the high school in his tiny – 477 people -- hometown of Mount Vernon, South Dakota played. So Chad did not have any grandiose images of going to a big-time college. He figured he would play at a Division II or a I-AA school or perhaps walk-on at a bigger program. “I wasn’t on the radar, I wasn’t on the screen,” he says. “I was on the ground.”

But Iowa head coach **KIRK FERENTZ** saw something about Greenway when the kid visited the Hawkeyes’ locker room – “the energy in his face,” says Ferentz – that prompted him to offer the earnest young man a scholarship.

All in all, it was quite a jump from Mount Vernon to highly rated NFL prospect. “My situation was a little more unique, coming from where I came from,” says Greenway. “I had no clue how to play with 11 guys on the field. I had no idea. I had never played in an 11-man football game in my life.”

Didn’t seem to matter. Greenway would end up with the fifth-most career tackles in Iowa history (416).