

**February 20, 2007**



An interview with:

## MIKE MAYOCK

THE MODERATOR: I want to welcome you to the NFL Network conference call with Mike Mayock. Mike Mayock is the NFL Network's lead college football draft analyst who will be in Indianapolis beginning Thursday as part of NFL Network's 27 hours of live scouting combine coverage. He was also our lead analyst and game analyst for the 2007 Senior Bowl.

Television enhancements will include all 27 hours in high-definition. In addition NFL Network has added a cable cam above the field, giving a fresh angle to the action.

I'll get this started, Mike, with the first question. How do you think the addition of cable cam will enhance NFL Network's coverage of the combine?

MIKE MAYOCK: The cable cam thing for me, I don't really care about the technology piece of it. I just think it will be easier for us to get from drill to drill. I would like to see us do a better job of covering some of the top players as they go from drill to drill.

If the top-rated -- if Adrian Peterson is doing the short shuttle, I think we can get to him very quickly, get a time for his short shuttle, then get you back to the 40-yard dashes, et cetera.

For me I think that camera is going to allow us more flexibility in getting to some of the key players.

THE MODERATOR: We can open it up to any questions for Mike.

**Q. Looking at things, if you read things that are going on, Brady Quinn's stock is falling. Is that just the nature of how things work? What is your assessment?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think it depends who you talk to. To me there's one issue with Brady Quinn, and I've watched just about every game tape. That issue is a couple times a game, I run the tape back about eight times and say, 'Why did he miss that throw?' He misses every game a couple of wide-open receivers.

In the NFL, the windows get smaller, not larger. There's an accuracy issue, number one, which I believe is real. Then there's a perception issue where people are saying, 'He's not a big-game player.' I think that's kind of a tough knock on the kid because, quite frankly, most of the games they lost, there was more talent on the other side of the field.

I think what you're seeing with Brady Quinn, when you look at a senior, people start to beat them up a little bit more easily than they can the juniors who only come out January 15th. So Brady Quinn hasn't thrown the football since the bowl game. The bowl game was a tough game for Notre Dame. I'm hoping he comes down to the combine and throws the heck out of the football.

**Q. Peyton Manning was sort of the same coming out, from a Heisman possibility, he was really picked apart in the combine.**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think that's some of it. When you're a senior who has had a long career, sometimes the newness of what you've accomplished has worn off a little bit and people look to nitpick. They've had a full year to go through his tapes and to start saying, 'Well, maybe he's not a franchise quarterback because.'

Now, JaMarcus Russell is going to start to get picked on also. As we get closer to the draft,

people will start to go up and down from a perception standpoint. I mean, to me Brady Quinn is still the same quarterback I watched as a junior, and he's still a franchise-type quarterback. All those perceptions don't really get to me because I can sit down with the game tape.

**Q. You mentioned JaMarcus Russell. Kind of the flipside of Brady Quinn right now. Do you expect his stock to go up a bit? Is he as sensational as people have been talking about?**

MIKE MAYOCK: From a physical skill set perspective, I've never seen a college quarterback with more ability than JaMarcus Russell. You put the tape on and it's frightening. He's 6'6", 260 pounds. He can make every throw. He's got better touch than you would expect. He's got a pretty good feel for the game for a guy that hasn't had all that many snaps.

He's a guy physically that is without parallel. The questions with JaMarcus Russell are going to come up on the work ethic side and how much the guy loves football or doesn't love football. But the point about Russell is this: at the top end of that NFL Draft, you're playing guys \$10, \$15, \$20 million guaranteed top. If you miss at the top end, you can set your franchise back three to five years, especially with a franchise quarterback.

As we get closer, the scrutiny on JaMarcus Russell will increase, especially off the field. So how much does the guy love football? How hard is he willing to work? Really that's what Al Davis and the Oakland Raiders have to decide because I think they've probably already decided that Andrew Walter is not their guy, they passed on two quarterbacks last year, and they're sitting with the topic in the draft, we need to take a franchise quarterback.

**Q. Speaking of quarterbacks, how deep overall is this quarterback class? Specifically, what do you think of BYU's John Beck?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think it's a pretty average quarterback class. I think you've got two first-round picks. Over the last six years, they've averaged three in the first round. I think Drew Stanton, Trent Edwards and Kevin Kolb are the three guys that are kind of vying to be the third quarterback pick, probably somewhere in the second round.

I think there's some average depth. I think people have to answer some questions to

themselves about Troy Smith and Chris Leak. As far as Beck, I think he had a really impressive senior season. I think he's smart. I think he has a slightly above-average arm, I think he has good footwork, and I think he's the kind of guy that the NFL will value somewhere on the second day, fourth round pick, with an opportunity to make a team as a backup, learn their system, then see whether or not two or three years down the road he can ever be a starter.

**Q. How much can a player help or hurt himself by working out at the combine? Can you discuss Paul Posluszny?**

MIKE MAYOCK: Opinions are all over the board on Posluszny. Some people think he's nowhere near as explosive or good an athlete as AJ Hawk. AJ Hawk was a top five pick as a linebacker a year ago, a Big-10 linebacker, and most people think at best Posluszny is a mid to late first round pick. I know teams that value him in the third round. There are opinions all over the board open him.

My take on Paul Posluszny is he might not be as explosive. He might be narrow through the hips, all these things they take shots on him for. But when you put the tape on, the kid makes plays all over the field.

I think one of those playoff teams somewhere 22 through 32 in the first round, I think one of those playoff teams is going to say, 'Wow, he's a tough kid, smart kid, he flies all over the field, and he can come in and play for us.'

As far as the combine in general, I'm a big believer, and it has nothing to do with me being affiliated with the NFL, I'm a big believer that why wouldn't a kid want to work out with all 32 teams there. The more I've been around this whole thing, you know, you got 32 NFL head coaches and general managers there. With your private workout on campus, no matter how good you are, you might get five or six NFL head coaches. So more and more the people I talk to around the league say, I want that bright lights kind of player, a kid that's not afraid to compete.

What the kids don't understand, there's this perception about a slow track. It doesn't matter whether they're running in mud, AstroTurf or FieldTurf or natural grass, the scouts and people make adjustments for the surface. So if you go home to Miami or USC or Penn State and decide not to run at the combine, you run on an ultra-slick

surface, they're going to take time off anyway to make it the same as the surface in Indy.

You might as well go apples to apples with all the other seniors and juniors in the country.

**Q. In the draft, aside from punters and place kickers, is there a position you would not want to take in the first round?**

MIKE MAYOCK: You're talking about in general or this year?

**Q. In general. I've heard scouts say they won't take a guard, they'd rather take a tackle. Coaches have said, I don't want a wide receiver in the first round.**

MIKE MAYOCK: To me, I don't think you can make those kind of sweeping statements, although there are tendencies in the first round of the draft. Different teams have different philosophies. But if an interior lineman, and I'm talking about centers and guards, if an interior lineman is a better player than the next tackle on the board, you better take that interior lineman. I think in the last couple years, the Patriots took a kid at No. 32 a couple years ago out of Fresno who is a guard/tackle type guy because he was the best player on their board. Last year Davin Joseph, a guard from Oklahoma, went in the 20s.

I think a lot of these perceptions are starting to leave. Some people felt like you shouldn't take a safety in the first round. Last year Michael Huff went at seven, Donte Whitner went at eight. To me it comes down to the kid player. If you start making sweeping generalizations, I think you hurt your football team.

**Q. Looking specifically at this year's draft, what do you find as the strongest and weakest positions?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I'm not big on the tight end class. The group of senior tight ends was the worst I've seen in a while. The two juniors came out, Greg Olsen and Zach Miller, which has helped it. But there isn't a whole lot of depth there and there aren't hardly any tight ends that will block anybody.

From a strength perspective, there are a couple different positions. I really like the interior offensive linemen this year. I think there are four or five first-round type kids that are centers and guards this year. I think you might be surprised to see guys like Ben Grubbs from Auburn, Justin Blalock from Texas, Arron Sears from Tennessee.

They're all considered interior linemen, and they're really good football players. I think the running back class got helped immensely by the underclassmen as did the wide receiver class.

**Q. What are your thoughts on Amobi Okoye, defensive tackle out of Louisville?**

MIKE MAYOCK: He's probably helped himself as much or more than anybody in the country. Obviously, everybody is intrigued because he's 19-years old. I can't even imagine being a 16-year-old freshman in college and handling football, academics and the social situation. So the kid's a little bit mature. He weighed in at 287 pounds, which was really light at the Senior Bowl. That was down about 15 or 18 pounds. He was the quickest I had ever seen him.

I graded him on tape as a second-round pick off tape. At the Senior Bowl, he's a first-round kid. I know a lot of teams that think he's a top 15 type player.

**Q. I heard a lot of questions surrounding Leon Hall regarding burst and recovery speed. What do you think about Leon Hall?**

MIKE MAYOCK: He's my top-rated corner right now. I think the kid that's going to blow up next week is Chris Houston from Arkansas. Leon Hall, I think he's got a good burst, tremendous change of direction. The question has been his recovery speed and his long speed. My spies, where he's working out right now, tell me he's going to surprise people and run worst-case scenario low 4.4s. If he runs that, he's going to answer all those questions.

**Q. What kind of advice would you have for a team like the Vikings? They're sitting at number seven. Receiver is clearly their biggest need. So many examples of receivers in the top 10 that don't work out. Is that a position you would go for in the top 10?**

MIKE MAYOCK: Calvin Johnson is going to be gone prior to seven. If Calvin Johnson is gone, you have to ask a couple of questions. Because Ted Ginn brings additional value as a return guy, he's being pushed up a little bit higher. I think he's more raw as a receiver than even his college teammate, Gonzalez. I think seven is high for any of the other receivers, in my opinion.

If you're the Vikings, I think you got to look

for a receiver that fits your type of offense in the second or third round.

**Q. Do you have any thoughts in general on taking a receiver in the top 10?**

MIKE MAYOCK: When you get a kid with great physical ability like Calvin Johnson with a great work ethic, there's no doubt he's a top 10 pick, he's a top five pick. I have no doubt about Calvin Johnson. The question a lot of people have is the maturity factor of a lot of the kids that are coming out every year at the wide receiver position, number one. Number two, just trying to pick up the nuances of an NFL system because of what they have to deal with very complicated defenses.

It often will take a couple of years for any wide receiver to make an impact in the NFL regardless of where they're drafted. Calvin Johnson is a really mature kid. Fitzgerald, the kid from Pittsburgh a couple years, Bolden, very mature kid. They're the ones that usually make statements early on.

**Q. Joe Thomas, how does he compare to Ferguson from last year, your take on him overall as a prospect?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think he's one of the four or five elite players in this draft at the top end of it. Compared to D'Brickashaw Ferguson, they're similar in that they're both somewhat finesse players with great feet and long arms. I think Thomas is physically stronger and tougher than Ferguson. Ferguson still has to get stronger to play at a higher level in the NFL. Thomas is stronger than that, but he's got great feet, he's got a good work ethic. He's only a four-year player at Wisconsin, who I believe played one spring bowl. He's a guy that's got an awful lot of upside. I don't think he's going to get passed two or three in the draft.

**Q. The defensive end crop?**

MIKE MAYOCK: They're an interesting crew. There are opinions all over because you got a lot of juniors involved there. Gaines Adams is considered the elite defensive end in the draft. The question with Gaines Adams, similar to JaMarcus Russell, is how important is the game and his work ethic. There's been some inconsistent play with Gaines Adams.

Then you get Jarvis Moss from Florida, who is a junior. He's highly athletic, can rush the

quarterback, not real strong at the point of attack, but the second-most athletic defensive end in the draft.

I've got Adam Carriker from Nebraska as my No. 3 because I think he can match up in any defense, he can play a 3-4 defense as a defensive end, he can play in a 4-3 as either a base end or even kick inside the tackle.

Then there's Jamaal Anderson from Arkansas. Some people think he's a top five or top 10 pick. I see some inconsistencies in the game. His motor isn't there all the time. That's what I mean about the juniors.

The biggest guy that's dropped the furthest is Quentin Moses from Georgia. He was supposed to be a top five pick in the entire draft heading into the year. Right now people are saying, Is he even a first-round pick?

That's kind of an overview of the potential first rounders. I think there's some really good football players in the second round, like Abiamiri from Notre Dame, Tim Crowder. And by the way, Anthony Spencer from Purdue is a bit of a tweener, defensive end, outside linebacker. He's one of the top two or three pass-rushers in this draft.

**Q. Which players from LSU really impress you?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think after JaMarcus Russell, you have to look at one of my favorite players in the entire draft, which is LaRon Landry, the free safety. I mentioned earlier two safeties with it in the top 10 last year, Huff and Whitner. I think there's a bit of a trend in the NFL now trying to draft more athletic safeties because safeties have to play deep half coverages, they have to play man-to-man, sometimes get up in the box and be physical.

I think LaRon Landry in my opinion is a top 10 pick.

**Q. How many LSU guys do you see going in the first round?**

MIKE MAYOCK: Probably Russell, Landry and Bo. Then I think Davis fits in in the first half of the second round.

**Q. The Bills have the 12th overall pick. When you look at the board, who do you think could fill a need for them?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think if you start on the offense sit side, if Levi Brown, the tackle from Penn

State is there at 12, I think he'd have to be very attractive. I think on the defensive side, assuming they lose the corner, I think if Leon Hall is already gone, then the guy that I think is going to surprise people this week is Chris Houston. I mentioned Hill earlier from Arkansas. He completely shut down Dwayne Jarrett from USC. He's the best press cover corner probably in this draft. I think Leon Hall, Chris Houston. I think those kind of players in the corner position will make a lot of sense for them.

**Q. How much will the combine either change or alter your opinion on these guys?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think it doesn't alter too many things because I've watched so much tape of most of these kids. I think it can reinforce impressions or can make you question your evaluation a little bit. There are prime examples of different kinds of kids that need good weeks. For instance, Marcus McCauley, the corner from Fresno, has had a horrible year. He was a kid last year they had as a top 10 pick coming into this year. I'm going into the combine saying, 'How well is he going to run?' I want to watch him work out. I want to hear what the NFL coaches and people tell me about his personal interview process.

For me there are certain kids I have questions about that I'm trying to get some answers down there. But it doesn't drastically change things other than to reinforce or open the book up on a particular kid.

**Q. Is Dwayne Jarrett of USC one of those guys with something to prove? Can you tell me why he is not going to be the second coming of Mike Williams?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I don't know if any of you remember, but I took a lot of heat a couple years ago because I thought Mike Williams had no shot as an NFL player. I thought he was kind of a tweener between a tight end and a wide receiver. I don't think Dwayne Jarrett has the skills today to get off the line of scrimmage against quality NFL corners. I need to caveat it by saying he's a great athlete, he runs better than Michael Williams, he changes direction better than Michael Williams, he's nowhere near as stiff through the hips as Michael Williams. He's got great ball skills like a Larry Fitzgerald.

His question mark is going to be his speed and suddenness. How quick is he? Can he get off the line of scrimmage? Can he run away from NFL

corners? What he runs is important. I've heard some rumors he's running poorly and won't test himself this week.

**Q. When you look and assess this group of receivers, how much does the fact that you have the kids from USC, LSU, the kids from Ohio State, how much will they push each other and kind of help each other as this goes forward?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think from a perspective of pushing each other, they've been doing it throughout their careers. What happens is they all go work out at the special camps around the country. That's where they really get pushed. From the time, whenever their season ended, bowl games, whatever, when their season ended and they choose to go to a camp in Orlando or Phoenix or New Jersey, wherever they're going to camp, that's where the big push comes both from 40-yard dashes and agility drills, but also with the positional workouts.

I talk to people who are working out where Bo is working out, Craig Davis. I'm trying to find out how they're doing in one-on-one drills against corners. That's where they really push each other because there's pride on the line. I find that piece of it fascinating.

**Q. How do you think the receiver crop rates overall with those guys at the top? I think Calvin Johnson is a no-brainer. He can be a Pro Bowler?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I have Bo ranked ahead of Jarrett as far as the big receivers are concerned. I think Ted Ginn is a guy that's going to be real attractive to people because he might be the fastest guy in college football, plus he's got added value. A couple of the guys I'm intrigued with are the teammates of some of those players. I like Steve Smith from USC. I like him better than Dwayne Jarrett. He's not going to get drafted as high, but I really like Steve Smith. I also like Gonzalez from Ohio State. I think they're going -- they're not going to be all pros, necessarily, but I think they're going to be solid NFL players.

**Q. I'm asking about Robinson from Illinois State?**

MIKE MAYOCK: The wide receiver?

**Q. Right.**



MIKE MAYOCK: All the small-school kids, this is a big week for. I'll be the first to tell you, I haven't even watched him on tape because I have to crunch the top one hundred guys on tape and I'm a one-man show. I know his reputation. What I know about the small school kids, they've got to do all the drills, he has to run well, he's got to do all the change-of-direction drills well because that's what they're going to be looking for, then he's got to catch the ball and not drop any, especially on that guillotine they have.

It's a huge week for the small-school kids because they don't get the same opportunities, unfortunately, as the big-school kids do.

**Q. Reggie Nelson from Florida and Bill Cohen?**

MIKE MAYOCK: Reggie Nelson is kind of a borderline late one, early two. He makes plays. I think there's some questions about his long speed. They want to make sure from a change-of-direction perspective. He can be as smooth as some of the elite safeties that go in the first round. What he does this week is important.

Cohen is considered more of, at best, a second-day guy. Again, he's got to come in and lift a lot of weight. I think at this point in Cohen, people already have a perception of what he is. I don't think things are going to change a whole lot for him.

**Q. You talked about the OSU receivers. I'm curious about the rest of their guys, like Troy Smith?**

MIKE MAYOCK: Troy Smith has been all over the place with people's opinion. I think he's a pretty easy evaluation. I've been pretty consistent all year long on it. When people got carried away with him during the year, and he had a great year, they were talking about him as a first-rounder, I never believed that. When he had a bad bowl game, that didn't change my opinion of him.

I think he's probably a third-round quarterback. I think the reason is that he makes about 80 to 90 percent of his plays outside the tackle box. I give him credit for coming further than any college quarterback in college football over the last three years. I guarantee you he has an NFL arm. He's going to get drafted and he's going to have an opportunity to play the quarterback position. I think you're going to see two to three years from now if he works his tail off, he'll get an opportunity to take some snaps.

Unfortunately for him and Chris Leak and all the guys under six feet, it's a short list of quarterbacks in the NFL on the roster let alone starters.

**Q. What about Pittman? He's been kind of overlooked. I think he could be a very good receiver, but that's just my opinion.**

MIKE MAYOCK: Well, I think he's probably in this year's class of running backs, I think he probably should have stayed another year. As far as coming out this year, I think he's probably going to be a mid to late second-round pick. He's a really good football player. What he has to prove is that he can be a three-down back, that he's strong enough, physical enough, tough enough that he can play on all downs as opposed to a change-of-pace back where your value isn't as good. He's got something to offer to NFL teams because of his athletic ability.

**Q. Is Michael Griffin the best of the projected strong safeties? How intriguing is the safety from Virginia Tech?**

MIKE MAYOCK: The way I'm grading safeties is there's kind of a trend toward placing higher value on kids that can play both positions as opposed to saying a kid is a free safety or a strong safety. I look at the safety class, first round LaRon Landry and Brandon Meriweather from Miami. Michael Griffin and Reggie Nelson are on the bubble of late one, early two. All four of those guys can interchangeably play both positions, that's why there's some real value to them. After those four, I have a big drop-off to my next safety. As far as Aaron Rouse is concerned, he's body beautiful, he's 6'4", 220 plus pounds, can run well. He's going to look good at the combine. But when I put tape on, he's a highly inconsistent player and he's not physical at all for his size. He helped himself at the Senior Bowl. I'm not a huge fan of him because he doesn't have a consistency from a game-to-game basis.

**Q. The receivers after Calvin, where do you see them going?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I see five potential first-round picks at the wide receiver position. I'm not saying -- I'm saying they're all first-round picks. I'm saying good go in the first round. Calvin Johnson, Dwayne Bowe, Ted Ginn, Dwayne Jarrett, Robert Meachem. Those five guys have a

lot of first-round grades from teams around the league. After that I see guys like Gonzalez from Ohio State, Davis from LSU, Sidney Rice, Chris Davis from Florida State, Steve Smith from USC. That's another clump of kids. Typically wide receiver positions average about 12 or 13 on the first day. That's 10 names for you right there.

**Q. Does what Devin Hester did this year have any help for Ted Ginn?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think it does. I gave him a second-round grade a year ago. He didn't have a position. He wasn't a very good corner and he wasn't a very good wide receiver. But what he did in the return game was amazing. It will absolutely help over the next couple of years any return guys with electrifying ability. Ted Ginn might be the fastest guy in this draft. So it will help Ted Ginn.

**Q. Darius Walker, where do you see him going in the draft?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I expect him to go somewhere mid third round, plus or minus, in that area. There are an awful lot of running backs around the country that are at his height, weight, speed scenario. He's a good football player, played on a very good offensive team. He can catch the ball pretty well. He's probably not a three-down back and because of that he'll fall into the third round.

**Q. Do you see his time at the combine helping or hurting him, because he's not the quickest guy out there?**

MIKE MAYOCK: All these guys at the skill positions that aren't outright burners like a Ted Ginn have got to come in there and show people on straight-line speed they can run a certain number. If he goes in there and runs 4.65, it's going to hurt him. If he runs 4.48 or 4.52, it's going to help him. The whole change-of-direction thing in running backs is critical also.

**Q. How do you see the Skins and the Ravens draft this year?**

MIKE MAYOCK: We haven't even gone through free agency yet.

**Q. I have to ask the question.**

MIKE MAYOCK: The Ravens are drafting very late. I think they could use an offensive lineman. There is a whole group of really talented

interior offensive linemen. Depending on what happens in front of them, I think there are three or four logical guys in that group that would make sense. Where are they, 28, 29?

Anyway, I think that would be a logical place where there's some depth in the draft that would match up with one of their needs.

As far as the Redskins, you tell me what they think they want and I'll tell you what they'll do.

**Q. I think they'll probably add another wide receiver, but I have no idea.**

MIKE MAYOCK: Wide receiver is a possibility there. We've already gone through all five or six of those guys. It's kind of pick your flavor. Which guy fits your system the best. You want a big West Coast guy, a smaller Ted Ginn type of guy that flies outside the numbers.

**Q. What do you think of A.J. Davis and Jon Abbate?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think Abbate really helped himself this year. He got a lot of recognition and attention based on both the season Wake Forest had and his personal family situation. He's a kid you root for. He's a gamer, he's a tough, tough kid. He's a good football player. He's a little bit of an overachiever. You could overdraft him if you're not careful. But I think he's going to be a first-day linebacker. I think he's going to go somewhere between late two to mid three. He's a tough, smart overachieving type of kid that worst-case scenario is going to be a real good special teams player and make some plays for you in your starting lineup.

**Q. And A.J. Davis?**

MIKE MAYOCK: NC State. Real quick, good feet. I think he's probably one of those bubble guys, a fourth round but could work his way into the third round. Not as big as they would like, but real good change-direction and quick feet.

**Q. (Question regarding pick at No. 14.)**

MIKE MAYOCK: If you're trying to line up kids here, at OT, if Levi Brown is there, that would be tremendous value. Unbelievable amount of talent. At linebacker, there's some interesting kids this year 'cause of the juniors that came out. Jon Beason from Miami. Under some people's radar. He might be the best linebacker in the draft. Lawrence Timmons from Florida State, freakish

natural ability. Another guy that would make a lot of sense. I'll tell you a guy that's going to run better than people expect next week is Patrick Willis, the inside linebacker from Ole Miss, who had a great Senior Bowl week. He's probably going to run 4.5 or better at 238, 240 pounds.

As far as the safeties are concerned, I like LaRon Landry, who would be a steal at 14. Brandon Meriwether I probably value higher than other people because I think he can step in day one and be your slot defender.

**Q. Lamar Widley, where do you see him drafted? How fast do you think he's going to run the 40? I've heard 4.7 or lower.**

MIKE MAYOCK: He's a good football player. He's been overlooked a little bit since the season ended. He's the kind of guy when you put the tape on, he makes plays. He's got more forced fumbles than anybody in Michigan's history. He's a little bit of a tweener, defensive end, outside linebacker tweener. They will ask him to stand up and do some linebacker drills along with the Spencer kid from Purdue. They'll be the two highest profile kids that defensive ends are going to be asked to step up and play some outside linebacker.

If he can run 4.6 at his size, that would be tremendous. What's going to be more important is watching how he moves in the linebacker drills. Can he turn and run, is he a natural knee bender or is he going to have to be a situational pass-rusher at the next level? I think he's going to be a solid second-round kid. It just depends whether it's a 4-3 team or a 3-4 team.

**Q. The tweener-type players, how vital is the combine for them to prove what they can do?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think it's important from the fact if you were a hands down defensive end in college, NFL teams are looking at you as a potential outside linebacker, I think it behooves you from the day your season ended right up to the draft day to be doing the drills that an outside linebacker has been doing his whole life. The change-of-direction, drops in pass coverage, man-to-man coverage, all the change-of-direction drills that D-backs and linebackers do, these guys have been doing for 20 years. You got a late start here. You don't necessarily need to be flawless at the combine, but you need to show these people you're athletic enough to sink your hips, bend your

knees and change direction fluidly. You don't have to do it perfectly, but you have to show athletic ability.

Beyond their 40 times and bench presses, do you want three teams to be interested in you or do you want 13 teams to be interested in you? The better you do in the outside linebacker drills, the higher your value is going to be pushed. It's critical for all of them.

**Q. Could you draw a parallel between Peyton Manning to Ryan Leaf and Quinn to JaMarcus Russell in the sense you have a senior that's been kind of almost overanalyzed and then you have the rising stud who is probably more physically gifted?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think a lot of people are going to make that a analogy. I think on the surface you can make that analogy. I made the statement that if you make a mistake at the top end, it can set your franchise back three to five years. Ryan Leaf was that mistake. This year, I can't get over how good and talented JaMarcus Russell is. I just blew me away. If I had the first, second, third, fourth, fifth pick in that draft, I would be tearing apart his personal life trying to figure out whether or not I could trust this kid with \$10 million.

I felt the several years ago like it was a no-brainer. Peyton Manning was the hardest-working kid in the draft. Ryan Leaf didn't really care about football. I thought that was a really easy call. This one I think is a more difficult call because JaMarcus Russell on the surface, not just physically, he does some things well with reading defenses. He has an innate feel in the pocket. You just better make sure he loves the game and he's going to work his tail off or he's just going to be a guy.

**Q. How many first round guys do you think are left out there as running backs, Tony and Michael possibilities?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I think they're the only two first rounders. I think Tony Hunt -- I have him higher than most people. He's my No. 3 running back in the draft. I have him in the second round. Then I have Brian Leonard from Rutgers in the second round. I've got Lorenzo Booker, who is that change-of-pace kind of Brian Westbrook, Reggie Bush knock-off. He's not as talented as those two kids, not as big as those two kids, but he causes match-up problems for a defense because



he catches the ball so well. They're my top five.

Then Michael Bush, people are all over the map on. This is an important week for him because he missed his entire season obviously. There are a lot of people that think he's kind of a stiff one-speed runner. He's a great athlete. He's a big kid. I think he needs to come in with his weight as low as he can get it. If he comes in at 258 pounds, I don't think he's going to run very well. He's got his weight down, show people two things: that he can run fast, that - make it three things - he can change direction and change the football.

**Q. Could you talk about defensive tackles and guess or analyze if you're sitting at No. 6 like the Redskins, is Gaines going to be rated higher than any of the defensive tackles on the board at that point?**

MIKE MAYOCK: When you're talking that high in the draft, there's two defensive linemen that are going to be evaluated right there. It's Gaines Adams and Alan Branch. They're the two guys at that level in the draft, one is a tackle, one is an end, the two defensive linemen that are going to be looked at at that level. Some people want to put in a couple of those other defensive ends, Jamaal Anderson or Jarvis Moss. I don't think Okoye or Ray McDonald rate up that high either. I think you're looking at two guys that high in the draft as far as defensive lineman.

**Q. Do you look at Branch and Adams, do you think Gaines and Adams will have the higher rating overall?**

MIKE MAYOCK: They're really close in that they have unbelievable physical gifts. Their talents are obvious when you put the tape on. They're two different animals now. One is a space heater in the middle and the other is a guy that comes off the edge like a rocket. They're completely different animals. They both on physical skill sets alone are worthy of being drafted in the top six or seven players. The question with both of them is consistency. You've got two very similar guys. It depends, number one, on what position do you want to draft and, number two, you we are do your homework on both of them because they both have been up and down.

**Q. Last year's draft was a celebrity draft. This year's draft probably doesn't have as many celebrities in it. Going into the**

**combine, with all the exposure of the combine, is there a potential to create some celebrity buzz among this group of guys?**

MIKE MAYOCK: Interesting question. Last year we had the whole quarterback thing, the three very highly rated quarterbacks. That seemed to be -- to capture everybody's attention.

I think you're going to see a few kids blow up at the combine this week and next week. The whole fascination with the 40-yard dash is amazing to me. But you're going to see some guys that are going to blow up next week because of that. The fact that they're pretty good football players also to me is very important. Whether it's Chris Houston or Lawrence Timmons or Patrick Willis or Leon Hall, Calvin Johnson, there are going to be some stories that come out of this combine. I really hope the high-level, the high-image guys work out because that obviously captivates America even more.

Calvin Johnson, if he comes in at 6'5", 234 pounds and runs a (indiscernible) 440, people are going to go crazy. Amobi Okoye, JaMarcus Russell if he works out, Brady Quinn if he works out, I think there's potential there. It's just the key thing is who is gig to work out and who isn't.

**Q. You haven't said much about Adrian Peterson. How concerned are you about his injury history?**

MIKE MAYOCK: That's the question. You put it right on the head. That's really the only question. Most people think he's going to be a top five pick. A lot of people think Cleveland is where he's going to end up. He's got that upright running style which means you're probably going to take a pounding, and he has. The amazing thing is, he and Marshawn Lynch are both juniors, but he has a couple hundred more carries. When he played, they gave him the ball 20, 25, 30 times. Marshawn Lynch comes out of a two-tailback system. Adrian, rest-taking ability, but is he going to be durable enough to take the pounding in the NFL? I heard he's going to weigh in at about 214 pounds. He's a cut, lean guy that reminds me of Dickerson from a couple years ago. 214 is pretty light for a guy that tall. I think he's probably there because he wants to run the best 440 you can. You compare him with Marshawn Lynch who is going to be 230 something and caught four times as many passes in his career who is probably going to run in the 4.4s at 230 pounds. I think the whole running back

thing is going to be to get rekindled after the combine. Adrian Peterson is a consensus top five pick.

**Q. How do you evaluate kids from Minnesota, Matt Spaeth who can't work out because of his shoulder, and Gary Russell?**

MIKE MAYOCK: Spaeth is a kid that is very similar to several other tight ends this year. After the two juniors, there's a clump of four or five tight ends. I'm not trying to be too negative, but none of them are real interested in blocking people. Part of that is what the NFL is these days. They like the more athletic tight end. The Chandler kid from Iowa, the Harris kid from Rutgers, Ben Patrick from Delaware, that's kind of the next tier of tight ends.

I think Spaeth is probably -- I've heard anywhere from third to fifth round on him. That's probably fair, given his production and a little bit of his injury history.

The Russell kid falls in with Moss from Miami and a couple of those other kids that have been either out because of academics or disciplinary reasons. This becomes even more important to a kid who has shown some skill as a running back, who has been out of sight, out of mind. Is he going to show up in the best shape of his life ready to run, ready to catch, ready to tell people in personal interviews that the game of football is really important to him, or is he going to show up like Claret did a couple years ago and completely bomb.

There's some of those stories coming out of this also.

**Q. Like the Colts did with Clark, moving him out as a receiver, is the thinking toward tight ends changed in recent years?**

MIKE MAYOCK: It really has. Here is what happens. If you have a Kellen Winslow type of kid, he gets picked in the top 10 because if you think you've got a Gates or somebody that can cover two vertically that causes match-up problems, can he be a Shockey, Heap, that kind of player, more and more the NFL has gone to the receiving type tight ends. Now all of a sudden with Clark splitting out, that engendered all kinds of attention. The NFL is a copy cat league.

When you can get a match-up issue, whether it's at the running back position like Westbrook and Bush when they split out, or think about it with a tight end, the tight ends in the

huddle, you're anticipating he's going to line up in line as a normal tight end, all of a sudden he lines up in the slot, now you have a match-up problem. You don't have your nickel in the game, you got a real athletic tight end against a safety.

So, yeah, the answer is more and more the NFL is going toward real athletic pass-catching tight ends.

**Q. Spaeth is not a super fast guy. Can he do what a Clark did? Is he as fast as a Clark?**

MIKE MAYOCK: We'll find out, not this week, but his pro day workout. I don't know what he's going to run. That whole group of kids, Milner, Scott Chandler, Spaeth, Clark Harris, they're probably not going to run the 4.55 type of thing where that elevates you to an elite status. If you're running 4.75, that's not going to scare a bunch of safeties. What they run is going to be important at the tight end position.

**Q. How do you rate SEC this year as a talent source?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I haven't even broken down the conferences yet. To me the SEC is the best football conference in the country. Last year I believe the ACC had the most high round picks. I haven't even really sat down and gone through all the top-level players by conference. I have to plead a bit of ignorance on that. I think it's the most solid football conference in the country.

**Q. The fact that Ginn isn't going to be able to run the 40 until March 10th, will teams be willing to wait?**

MIKE MAYOCK: If you have an injury, you get a free pass. When you're a high-level kid, then he'll be fine. People will be showing up at his workout. I'm sure his agent won't allow him to work out till he's fully ready to go.

He'll be fine. It's just a matter of making sure he's healthy, that he can run and, more importantly, when he does work out, outside the framework of the 40-yard dash he's able to change directions on that foot, catch the football, do all the things a wide receiver needs to do other than just a 40-yard dash.

**Q. Last year Vernon Davis probably did himself more good at the combine probably than anybody else. If you had to pick two or**

**three guys this year who might be this year's Vernon Davis, who might that be?**

MIKE MAYOCK: Chris Houston corner, Arkansas. A lot of people have him in the second round right now. I gave him a first round grade. I think he's going to go in there and run a sub-4 440, bench press 24 to 28 times, which is unheard of. I think people are going to be going, Wow. He reminds me on tape a little of Robinson who was the 10th pick about two or three years ago out of South Carolina. I think this kid is going to just rocket up the charts. I think he's one kid that's going to blow up.

Even already knows about Calvin Johnson. He's a top five pick. I think Lawrence Timmons, the Florida State defensive end outside linebacker, is another kid that has a chance to blow up like that.

**Q. You talked about Peterson being Dickerson like. Are there some small backs in this draft that are going to be like Maurice Jones-Drew?**

MIKE MAYOCK: I blew it on him. I gave him a late third-round grade. Lumped him in there. 5'7", 5'8", not big enough. From the waist down, he's one of the most explosive guys I've ever seen. I wasn't even close on him. The rest of the league wasn't either.

But as far as trying to say is there something like him out there, I haven't seen it yet. Lorenzo Booker, who is the kid I really like out of Florida State, is a thinly built kid who causes match-up problems, but he can't carry the ball 20 times a game like Maurice Drew can. Some people are starting to like the Nebraska junior, Jackson. Haven't done enough homework on him. He's the kid that split a lot of carries, but strong, tough, between the tackles with a little bit of a burst.

I think Maurice Jones-Drew was just an anomaly.

**Q. You mentioned earlier a fascination with the 40 time.**

MIKE MAYOCK: I'm the son of a coach, and I grew up watching an awful lot of game film. I think I have a good understanding of what makes a good football player. The fascination with the 40 to me, while I think it's fun and we have a great time with it, I think it also distorts what the kid is or isn't sometimes as a football player because the reality is they're all going to these camps and they're

learning how to start because the most important thing in the 40 is your first five, six, seven yards. They're all learning how to get in the three-point stance and start like a track guy. It's not really making them a better football player so I kind of laugh. But I understand from a comparison perspective in the evaluation process that it becomes important.

To me the tape and what kind of football player you are still matters more. But the measurables are critical to the personnel side of the staff.

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