

Andre Frye Mock Draft

NFL draft season is one of the best times of the year. Yes, people do mock drafts just to pass the time gap between the Super Bowl and the draft. There is a science to it though considering the first round pick can change the direction of a franchise or be the missing piece of a championship caliber roster. One good draft class can bolster a team all the way to the playoffs, just ask the New Orleans Saints. Their class was one of the best in decent memory starring Alvin Kamara of course. The anchor however was selected in the first round in Marshon Lattimore. Both received offensive and defensive rookie of the year honors respectfully. Tons of things will change from now until draft day including free agency (which was not factored into this), combine results, and individual pro day showcases. Here is my first round of the first Thoughts From The Bench 2018 mock draft

1. Cleveland Browns - QB Sam Darnold, USC

It's extremely obvious that Cleveland needs a QB. The past 2 years they traded down to pass on Carson Wentz and Deshaun Watson. Here with the first round pick, they will certainly take a QB. Darnold seems like the obvious choice here over Rosen, Allen, and even Mayfield. For me, winning back to back Pac 12 championships and the Penn State victory in the 2016 sold me to go first overall.

2. New York Giants - RB Saquan Barkley, Penn State

Every mock I've seen has back to back QBs in some way or form of Darnold and Josh Rosen. The biggest issue last year for this team was the inability to protect the QB and new head coach Pat Shurmur knows a good run game can do just that. Barkley is the best RB prospect I've ever seen. He's better than Gurley, Zeke, and Leonard. He's been sturdy, elusive, versatile, and dominant for Penn State. Putting him behind Eli in an offense containing Odell Beckham and promising TE Evan Engram could put the offense near the top of the league.

3. Indianapolis Colts - DE Bradley Chubb, NC State

This team has had a ton of problems this past year from Andrew Luck shoulder surgeries to losing out on a new HC in Josh McDaniels. The only thing they can do is turn the page and move forward into 2018. Chubb has the talent to help put 2017 in the past. Watching him single handedly terrorize my FSU Seminoles this past year was only the beginning of him establishing himself as the next defensive force in the NFL.

4. Cleveland Browns - S Minkah Fitzpatrick, Alabama

Having 2 picks in the first round is seemingly uncommon, but 2 picks in the top 5 is damn near unprecedented. To top it off, it's the Cleveland Browns who have the chance to select 2 potential superstars and I think they get one in Fitzpatrick. He was the best player on the Crimson Tide defense this past year and he's going to

need to bring his high intensity and playmaking ability to a division that contains Antonio Brown and AJ Green. He played safety this past year but has the cover ability to also play cornerback.

5. Denver Broncos - QB Josh Rosen, UCLA

Denver is 2 years removed from a Super Bowl victory and has fallen hard from the NFL elite ever since. It's been tough times for a team once led by one of the greatest who have ever done it in Peyton Manning. Josh Rosen is the obvious pick here for another team in desperate need of a QB. Trevor Sieman and Paxton Lynch have had opportunities but neither could elevate their game to the level Vance Joseph needed. The 2nd year coach gets to select his guy and you know John Elway is salivating over selecting a QB.

6. New York Jets - QB Josh Allen, Wyoming

The Jets were an intriguing team last year. Everyone figured them to be the worst in the NFL, myself included. At one point, they were pushing for a wild card berth until an unfortunate injury to Josh McCown all but ended their season. Still, they were successful enough for Todd Bowles to receive an extension. This pick here should prove to be the best case scenario for this team. By selecting Allen here, they get the guy some say has the most upside in this draft. The biggest thing is he can sit and learn behind McCown until Allen is ready to take over this team.

7. Tampa Bay Buccaneers - CB Denzel Ward, Ohio State

Tampa Bay has a ton of issues with pass coverage being a huge reason they did not take the step forward in this tough division. With elite QBs Drew Brees, Matt Ryan, and Cam Newton, the Bucs defense is going to need a shut down corner to add to a seemingly stout front 7. Ward is the number 1 CB in the draft, he should impact their pass defense immediately.

8. Chicago Bears - WR Courtland Sutton, SMU

New coach Matt Nagy is tasked with putting Mitch Trubisky on the map. Last year, Trubisky had no help in the passing game. Cohen is a receiving threat out of the backfield and can play the slot. TE Adam Shaheen was a nice late season emergence as well to work in the seams and goalline. With no help on the outside because of injuries to their entire receiving core, adding a 6'4" Sutton can help stretch the field and work outside the numbers.

9. San Francisco 49ers - WR Calvin Ridley, Alabama

The new multimillion dollar Jimmy Garoppolo is going to need some reliable receivers and Calvin Ridley is next on the list. Some call him the best receiver in the draft and showed incredible big play ability in a run-first Alabama offense. Pierre Garcon is still serviceable but is getting older. By adding Ridley, coach Kyle Shanahan begins to build the offense Jimmy G needs to succeed.

10. Oakland Raiders - ILB Roquan Smith, Georgia

Jon Gruden is back and needs to make a splash. With the 10th pick, I believe he does. The Butkus Award winner will slide into a defense in need of another playmaker alongside Khalil Mack. He was an animal this past year for Georgia covers sideline to sideline. He was all over the place during the college football playoffs and I believe his game will transition tremendously at the pro level.

11. Miami Dolphins - G Quinton Nelson, Notre Dame

Dolphins fans will probably not like this pick because a guard isn't exactly the sexy pick at 11, but this will fill a huge need and solidify an offensive line led by Mike Pouncey and Larmey Tunsil. Don't let his big frame fool you because this man is an absolute mauler with great pull ability. Coach Adam Gase is creative and will use him in a multitude of ways to get this guy out in space in outside runs for Kenyan Drake.

12. Cincinnati Bengals - OLB Tremaine Edwards, Virginia Tech

If I'm a Bengals fan, I am ecstatic about this player falling to this spot in the draft. He's a freakish athlete and is absolutely relentless off the edge. At 6'5" and 250 pounds, he will be another disruptive piece to a defense already boasting Geno Atkins and Vontaze Burfict.

13. Washington Redskins - DT Vita Via, Washington

There is so much to say about this team about how the Kirk Cousins situation was handled, but they are moving on from him and are entering the Alex Smith era. With the QB position anchored down, this team should use the draft to anchor the defensive side. Via is a huge body that will demand double teams on the interior line. Adding him along side a healthy Jonathan Allen should improve the front 7. With his size, I do worry whether he can be a three down player; however, with his size he should have no problems pushing the pocket either. Playing in a 3-4 defense, they will need a guy who can eat space and free up these linebackers.

14. Green Bay Packers - OT Mike McGlinchey, Notre Dame

Aaron Rodgers needs to be on the field for the Packers to return to the playoffs. Drafting the best tackle in the draft is a good start to make this a reality. McGlinchey lists at 6'8" and around 315 pounds so it will be extremely difficult for anyone to get to his backside. He is the best tackle in the draft so this would be an excellent pick right here at 14 for coach Mike McCarthy and new GM Brian Gutekunst.

15. Arizona Cardinals - QB Lamar Jackson, Louisville

With Carson Palmer retired, there is an obvious need for a new QB here at 15. New head coach Steve Wilks is tasked with finding the right guy who needs to

take this franchise into the future. Some say there are questions on whether Jackson can translate to the NFL level. If you've watched him as much as I have over the past two years, you should realize that Jackson is an absolute gamer. He is the best dual threat QB since Cam Newton and reminds me of Michael Vick in terms of athleticism. He took a huge step this year improving his passing abilities and staying in the pocket. Obviously if the 2016 Heisman trophy winner escapes it, he is must see TV.

16. Baltimore Ravens - WR Christian Kirk, Texas A&M

The Ravens are an interesting team because they have a stout defense and a stagnant offense. Missing the playoffs in the last 2 minutes of the season had to be tough because GM Reggie McKenzie stepped aside. With a new face in the front office, they need to make a splash to help Joe Flacco. Kirk would be a perfect fit for the way they play offense. He is a dynamic playmaker who can take the top off of a defense and should have an impact immediately.

17. Los Angeles Chargers - ILB Rashaan Evans, Alabama

The Chargers are another team who were on the outside looking in for the playoffs last year. Some people, myself included, figured that this was a team who could have made some noise if they got in. By adding Evans, I think they can take the next step this upcoming season. He's was a leader on a Crimson Tide defense who was loaded with playmakers. Adding him to a unit already boasting Joey Bosa and Melvin Ingram could make this defense the best in the division.

18. Seattle Seahawks - OT Connor Williams, Texas

Russell Wilson is the franchise and that is pretty evident. In order to ensure you have a chance every season at the playoffs, you have to protect him. By adding Williams, you can do just that. He also has great ability to get to the second level so this pick should also improve a putrid run game.

19. Dallas Cowboys - DT Da'Ron Payne, Alabama

Already boasting one of the best offensive lines in football, they are a player away from leaping up into the upper echelon on the defensive side. Payne is a house at 6'2" and 320 pounds and can play all around the interior. Adding him next to Demarcus Lawrence and an emergence from Taco Charlton could really be a problem for the rest of the league.

20. Detroit Lions - DE Marcus Davenport, UT San Antonio

He's a traditional 4-3 DE but has the athleticism and size to stand up for a 3-4. It is unclear what scheme new head coach Matt Patricia will play, but by adding Davenport and putting him opposite of Ziggy Ansah would give him a nice pass rush on both sides of the field.

21. Buffalo Bills - DT Maurice Hurst, Michigan

This team making the playoffs was nothing short of magnificent considering the help they needed, the decisions made with the roster the entire season with additions and subtractions, and the benching of their starting QB in Tyrod Taylor. With their first pick, I think adding a player in Hurst will help continue to build a defense in need of more playmaking. With his size and speed, Hurst can play outside on the end and inside in the A gap.

22. Buffalo Bills - QB Baker Mayfield, Oklahoma

With their 2nd pick acquired from the Kansas City Chiefs, coach Sean McDermott gets his guy at QB. The 2017 Heisman trophy winner will have to hit the ground running. The franchise has been searching for a good QB since Jim Kelly and I am sure the Bills Mafia will be pleased watching him play. The 2 obvious questions with him is his size and off the field issues. I believe he can put both of these questions to rest once he steps on the field. He was nothing short of phenomenal this past year and I believe if he was 2 inches taller, he would be the unquestioned number 1 pick. This man is a baller at the QB position and plays with a swagger unlike any other I've seen.

23. Los Angeles Rams - CB Josh Jackson, Iowa

Some call him the best pure cover corner in the draft boasting 18 pass breakups and 8 interceptions on the season. He is an incredible athlete and pending his combine results, could end up shooting up draft boards. With Trumaine Johnson a free agent and the Rams expected to use the franchise tag on WR Sammy Watkins, this seems like an easy choice for head coach Sean McVay.

24. Carolina Panthers - C/G Billy Price, Ohio State

Ryan Kalil announcing his retirement after the upcoming 2018 season, adding Price would make an easy transition for Cam Newton's new sheriff up front. Price has the size to play guard listed at 6'4" and 310 pounds and that would fill a need considering their current starter is an unrestricted free agent. Then once Kalil departs, the Panthers can shift Price over to the center position.

25. Tennessee Titans - OLB Harold Landry, Boston College

Despite winning the wild card round on the road in Kansas City, it was not enough to save the job of Mike Mularkey. Now new head coach Mike Vrabel is tasked with taking this young team to the next level. Being a defensive guy and former edge rusher himself, it makes sense for his first pick as head coach to be one of the best edge rushers in the draft. He only had 5 sacks last season but with his 6'3" and 250 frame, his game should transition to the NFL level easily.

26. Atlanta Falcons - DT Harrison Phillips, Stanford

With Dontari Poe a free agent, adding a player like Phillips will help cement their front 7 and fill an immediate need. They will be getting younger and more athletic up front with this addition. He has the size and ability to play the 1 and 3 technique pending situation of course. He's a high motor guy and did show that he can get after the QB this past season posting 7 sacks this past season.

27. New Orleans Saints - TE Mark Andrews, Oklahoma

This team has tried its hardest to replace Jimmy Graham. Free agent Coby Fleener has been a disastrous free agent signing barely seeing the field. Even at 39 years old, Drew Brees still slings the ball all over the field. Adding another weapon in Andrews could take this offense to the top of the league. He was Baker Mayfield's favorite target at Oklahoma working the middle and seams of the field. He has that big play ability that Brees desires in his tight ends.

28. Pittsburgh Steelers - S Ronnie Harrison, Alabama

It's no secret that the Steelers have the best offense in football. As good as that offense is, their defense is the reason they did not backup the talk of a Patriots rematch. Mike Mitchell will be a free agent in the 2019 season so he is a candidate to be released in order to free up cap space to sign Le'Veon Bell. By adding Harrison, the Steelers can slide him in to a young secondary in desperate need of playmaking. He's listed at 6'3" and 215 so he has the body to wreak havoc on the back end and near the line of scrimmage.

29. Jacksonville Jaguars - TE Hayden Hurst, South Carolina

The AFC runner-up Jaguars are a team who is in need of playmaking from the tight end position. Mercedes Lewis is north of 30 and is only limited to blocking and goalline work. Adding Hurst to an offense will give Bortles an option he has never had in his career: a dynamic, big bodied tight end who can work the middle of the field and stretch it down the seam. This is a run-first offense, but adding Hurst should help Bortles in his development in becoming a good, serviceable QB in this league.

30. Minnesota Vikings - OT Kolton Miller, UCLA

Case Keenum took this team to new heights this past season but he is a free agent. If they do decide to bring him back, they will need to protect him. Adding a huge bodied Miller will do just that. I wish the absolute best of luck to whoever has to try and get around his massive 6'8" and 310 pound frame. Protecting the QB, as the Vikings saw first hand playing in a division with Aaron Rodgers, will be the key if this team wants to get back to their first Super Bowl since 1977.

31. New England Patriots - CB Mike Hughes, UCF

The Patriots are in an interesting position here as a franchise. For the first time in awhile, they seem very unstable which is unlike them. With the benching of former

Super Bowl hero Malcom Butler, it seems inevitable that he will most likely be out of New England. With a hole on the outside of the defense then opened, in comes Hughes to take his place. The speedy Hughes was a huge part of the Knights undefeated season shutting down opposing wide receivers and returning punts and kicks.

32. Philadelphia Eagles - OLB Arden Key, UCLA

The Super Bowl LII champs will be partying on Broad Street until they have to kickoff the 2018 season and deservedly so. The champs put on a clinic in matching blows with Bill Belichick in order to secure the victory. The only negative thing you can point out was the lack of a pass rush on Tom Brady the entire game (except for the last 2:00 of course). Adding a long and athletic Key should help them continue to build a defensive unit led by Fletcher Cox. He is listed at 6'6" and 240 so adding him on the edge would give this defensive unit another playmaker. With Nigel Bradham expected to cash in on free agency, Key could slide in right away and have an impact.