Hello once again fellow Browns fans and draft junkies! After missing most of the season as far as Browns articles go I am back to begin the yearly “Feeling a Draft” series and, as usual, we will start with the Senior Bowl.

I haven’t been able to find time to put out the articles I wanted to do for the regular season and I didn’t want to put out stuff that wasn’t up to my standards, but when it comes to the draft I will neglect work and family for a bit in order to cover an event that I am truly passionate about. Not that I am not as passionate about the Browns because as any true Browns fan knows you have to be a passionate fan in order to follow this team through the darkness it has gotten lost in over the last few years. But I will admit it is a little harder to create time for those articles when it wasn’t immediately available. I mean, inept coaching and inconsistent play isn’t exactly something to get excited about but I will admit it was pretty fun watching some of the young talent blossom over this past season.

Well, enough about the past, the draft is about the future and that is why you can always get yourself pumped up for these 3 months leading up to draft day. It always gets my juices flowing when I think about exciting young talent and the opportunity to get a player who can potentially turn this city's fortunes around, and although there is no Andrew Luck or RG3’s in this draft there still are plenty of players who can help teams win games.

This series of articles is a way for me to share some of what I have learned about this year’s crop of players and it is also an avenue for me to talk about how the new regime’s schemes will be implemented in the 2013 season.

What: Senior Bowl
Where: Ladd Peebles Stadium Mobile, Alabama
When: Saturday January 26th, 2013 4:00 pm Broadcast on NFL Network
Links: NFL.com Senior Bowl page …… Official Senior Bowl Website … Game Week

Schedule

The Senior Bowl itself has turned into a huge event and really marks the beginning of the offseason for 30 of the 32 teams in the league. For many people running NFL teams, by the time the game comes on Saturday it's more of an afterthought because for the bulk of teams the event is really about the week of practice, player interviews, and the behind the scenes business that takes place.

For those who don't know already the Senior Bowl is an All-Star game where the best seniors that played college football get invited to show off their skills. They play by NFL rules and are coached by NFL coaches.The coverage of the event is on the NFL Network and starts on Monday. The coverage includes full practices from both the North and the South teams throughout the week. Last year I was able to watch the practices from my DVR and it really gave me a jump on learning the DNA of a lot of players that came out, including our QB Brandon Weeden and our RT Mitchell Schwartz.

I don't expect everyone to be as glued to their TV as I was but if you are interested in watching any of the coverage check your listings and set the DVR. For anyone interested in player evaluation, or if you just love the game and want see some of the best players in the country going at it, I recommend taking a peek.

Another interesting backdrop to note about the game this year is the fact that ex-Cleveland Browns GM Phil Savage is now the Executive Director of the Senior Bowl and he has done a great job of taking the event to the next level when it comes to accessibility and fan involvement.

Savage has also been successful in changing the way the Senior Bowl accepts players. This is the first time in Senior Bowl history that there will actually be two juniors on the roster. They are juniors in terms of athletic eligibility but they are really two players (OTs D.J. Fluker and Justin Pugh) that have been on their college campus four years and they both have graduated already, so in terms of college life they are really seniors but since they were redshirted……athletically they are considered juniors.

Personally I think this type of common sense thinking has been long overdue in many aspects

of college and pro relationships and it should be a great opportunity for these two players to showcase themselves against their peers. Both players are potential first day picks so keep an eye out for them throughout the week.
Before we get into some of the players I will have my eye on this week, I want to quickly talk about a couple of things that are happening behind the scenes during pro bowl week.

You will see plenty of out of work football people hanging around the Senior Bowl trying to establish and rekindle relationships in order to gain employment or plant seeds for the future. You will also see some recruiting being done by newly appointed head coaches and front office types in an attempt to fill out their staffs.
If you have been following my series in the past or you have read some of my other articles you may be tired of me saying it but I will say it again……the NFL is huge on relationships and that should be plenty evident when you look at the Browns and how they have filled their positions this off-season.

Guys have a certain level of trust in people they already know and if they haven't worked with them before, they will trust the opinions they get from people who have worked with them so you will see a lot of relationship building going on. That includes the agent community.

Agents can have a big influence when it comes to introducing people and starting relationships which brings me to the second thing that really starts during Senior Bowl week and carries on to Super Bowl and Combine week.

Every team is clearly aware of all the players who will be available on March 12th when free agency starts and Senior Bowl week can be a first contact with a player's agent that a club may be interested in. The level of conversation doesn't get deep yet but plenty of seeds are planted during this time period.

Now let's get back to the players and what I will have my eyes on this week. Even though the Browns have changed coaching staffs, offensively I don't think Cleveland needs a ton of youth infused into the roster so although I will always look at offensive players during these events, I won't be harping on that side of the ball like I was last year.

Other than having a true QB of the future the Browns already have a nice young core of players

to build on. Going into this year's offseason they already have two big WRs like Norv Turner likes, they have two good young offensive tackles, and they have a RB who appears to be a true NFL workhorse, so other than finding a big, strong, young QB to groom for the future and maybe a dynamic route running TE…….. I will be focusing on defensive players more than offensive players.

I understand that some are saying new defensive coordinator Ray Horton can coach a 4-3 scheme but I think his background in the 3-4 along with the fact new HC Rob Chudzinski has the most experience teaming his offenses up with a 3-4 defense will lead the team to switch schemes. If that is true the roster needs tweaking, so expect new VP of Player Personnel Mike Lombardi and his scouts to be trolling for players who are either scheme irrelevant or 3-4 scheme friendly.

When it comes to switching defenses, there will be many who say Phil Taylor, Ahtyba Rubin, or John Hughes can play end in that scheme but I'm not one of them. All of those players should be nose tackles in a 3-4 scheme and if they are forced to play end I expect them to become a much less effective player than they were in a 4-3. So I will be looking for 3-4 DEs, bigger more stout LBs in the middle, and players to play OLB who can get pressure on the QB as well as play in space.

I believe both Billy Winn and Frostee Rucker can be pretty solid DEs in the 3-4 but that still leaves a log jam of players who can play the NT position and not enough depth on the outside. I wouldn't even be shocked if the Browns look to move one of those NTs for some more draft picks or to a team with 3-4 players switching to a 4-3…….but that is a topic for another article.

Now that you have a general idea of what I will be looking for when watching Senior Bowl week I will get into some specific players I will have my eye on and if you want to look at the full rosters for the North and South teams just click on this link and scroll down to the link for each roster.

North Roster

QBs- The only QB on the North Roster I will study hard will be Mike Glennon. I think in knowing the downfield passing game our new HC and OC like to run Glennon is really the only guy who

truly fits that style on the North roster. My initial thoughts based on what I have seen from Glennon so far are mixed. In general I like his size and arm strength but he doesn't seem comfortable in the pocket when he is forced to move off his point and in the NFL it is critical to be able to do that. I actually will be more interested in his game performance than most players because I want to see his pocket presence when faced with a higher level of competition.

RBs- For the North Roster I will have my eye on Kenjon Barner. He has the type of speed and big play ability that would be the perfect compliment to a player like Trent Richardson. I am anxious to see how well he holds up in blocking drills and the consistency of his hands.

WRs- I will be watching small school WR Aaron Mellete out of Elon and converted QB Denard Robinson. I want to see if Mellete looks overmatched with the step up in competition because he has the type of size this offense likes. With Robinson I simply want to see how smoothly he can run routes. He will be great with the ball in his hands but if he can't get open he will only be a gimmick player in the NFL. I am interested in seeing how far he needs to come in order to be a legitimate contributor.

TEs- I will have my eye on Ryan Otten. I question his ability to get open in the NFL because he doesn't seem like he has much speed or burst but he catches the ball really well and I want to see if he looks slow compared to the LBs and Safeties that will be at the Senior Bowl.

OL- I won't be looking too hard at the tackles but in general I will have my eye on the guards. I want to see which ones show the ability to move DTs off the ball.

DL- Two guys in this group stand out to me and they are Margus Hunt and Alex Okafor. For Okafor I will be looking to see how well he moves in space. Some think he can move to OLB in a 3-4 but I am not completely sold as of now. For Hunt I just want to see him dominate like I think he will. Of all the candidates to play DE in a 3-4 he may be my favorite in the draft but I want to check his consistency against good competition.

LBs- I will have an interested eye on 3 LBs on this roster. Two of them, Khaseem Greene and Kevin Reddick, are two of my favorite LBs in the draft but I think both are 4-3 LBs. I will be watching how they perform but if we change schemes I don't think either one is a fit. I will also be watching John Simon. No not because he is a Buckeye, but because he will be playing OLB

in this game and I am interested to see how he looks in space. He has a chance to be a good pro but he will need to show he can make plays in space and not just get after the QB.

DBs- I will be watching this entire group because other than Joe Haden I don't have a lot of confidence in our current roster. I will be watching the safety group more than anything so I will be comparing Philip Thomas, Duke Williams, and T.J. McDonald.

South Roster

QBs- All 3 QBs on the South roster are interesting to me. Tyler Wilson is one of my favorite QBs in the entire draft and I am interested to see how he stacks up to E.J. Manuel and Landry Jones. In my book Manuel is more of a development player but his physical ability makes him really intriguing, especially since the push the ball downfield style is coming back to Cleveland. Landry Jones is a player who shot himself in the foot by not leaving school early. His draft stock has steadily dropped the more scouts see him play but it will be interesting to see if it was more about what was around him than him actually playing bad. I will have a close eye on how these guys stack up to each other.

RBs- The player I will be watching closely in this group is Andre Ellington. He is another RB I think is a perfect companion for Trent Richardson in Cleveland. He is a big play waiting happen and he has great speed.

WRs- The only WRs that truly interest me are Ryan Swope and Terrance Williams. Williams is another talented Baylor WR and I want to see him truly out-class the CBs at the Senior Bowl. Swope is a player who I think will end up being an inside WR. I want to see how well he gets in and out of breaks.

TEs- None of the South TEs are the type of dynamic pass catcher I am looking for but Alabama TE Michael Williams is an outstanding blocker and will be an asset to any NFL roster including Cleveland's.

OL- Like I said about the North roster, I won't be watching the OTs too much but I will be

watching Larry Warford to see how well he moves people of the ball. He played in the SEC and more than held his own so I expect him to do well but I want to see it.

DL- The player I will be watching the most is BYU DE/OLB Ezekiel Ansah. This guy is a physical freak who is a baby in terms of football experience. Ansah has the athleticism to play in almost any defensive scheme and he can play multiple positions in those schemes. I expect him to put on an athletic show and I will be watching front and center.

LBs- For the South LB group I will be watching inside LB Nico Johnson and OLB Chase Thomas. Johnson is a player who has experience as an inside LB in a 3-4 scheme and he could help adding bulk to the position for our roster. Thomas is a player who was an impact starter at OLB in a 3-4 scheme and isn't overly explosive but should be a starting caliber OLB in the NFL for a long time. He reminds me of a Paul Kruger, Matt Roth type.

DBs- Once again I will be watching the entire group with a special eye towards the Safeties, in particular Shawn Williams and Robert Lester. Lester sometimes looks a step slow in coverage. I want to see how well he holds up all week practicing against QBs who can push the ball downfield. Williams is also a guy who many say struggles against the pass and is an in the box Safety. I will also be watching him in order to see how he holds up all week.

Well Browns fans if you tune in to any of the coverage enjoy it and if you don't I will try and provide a recap on what I learned from watching. For those of you who have followed the series in years past welcome back…..I look forward to the journey and I hope you get something out of it. For those of you reading the "Feeling a Draft" series for the first time and wonder what it is all about you can click here and take a peek at the archives from years past.

As usual, and until next time,…….Go Browns!