The mock draft. For as long as I

The mock draft. For as long as I've been writing about sports, no columns generate more feedback or fan interest.

As Browns fans, the next three months are what we live for. In December and January, when fans of other teams are engrossed in the playoff chase, we're already numbed over … desperately pining for the end of the season and the establishment of the draft order. For us, the NFL Draft represents yet another chance to help the team return to the days of contention. The chance to add another key cog like a Kellen Winslow II or a Kamerion Wimbley. Or maybe to find a couple of diamonds in the rough after the first round, like the Bears did in last years draft with Devin Hester and Mark Anderson.

So here we go. It's early. The draft is still almost three months away. And the direction that teams go in free agency when it opens in mid-March will clearly have an effect on how and who they select. But as things stand now, here's how I see the first two rounds of the NFL Draft shaking out …

FIRST ROUND

1. Oakland Raiders – QB Brady Quinn, Notre Dame

The only thing you can count on each year with Al Davis and the Raiders is that there is little to no chance that they will do what you are counting on them to do. This season, 'Da Raiduhs have the number one overall pick, and one of the top prospects in the draft (JaMarcus Russell) is the type of rocket armed gunslinger that Al Davis is know to salivate over.

Poppycock, I say. Quinn has a helluva arm as well, and is the much safer pick for Al Davis, who is getting long in the tooth, and wants to win NOW. Brady Quinn is as NFL ready as they come, having played in a pro offense under Charlie Weis the last two years, and should be able to start from day one. Quinn has all the makings of a franchise quarterback, and will be the new face of the Raider organization throughout the remainder of Al Davis's golden years.

2. Detroit Lions – OT Joe Thomas, Wisconsin

Lions offensive coordinator Mike Martz is telling anyone asking him (and even those not asking him) that the team will not take a quarterback with the 2nd overall pick of this years draft. Has Martz been drinking truth serum? Or is this just a very early and very aggressive smoke screen from a man infatuated with one of the draft's top signal callers?

Having watched Mike Martz operate as a head coach, I just don't think he's smart enough to smoke screen, and I'm taking this bait. And for the love of all things sacred, this team actually started Ross Verba at tackle last year. The offensive line has forever been a problem in the Motor City, and the Lions will take their medicine in 2007 and take the top tackle off the board after what seems like a decade of taking receivers high at the top of the 1st round.

3. Tampa Bay Buccaneers – WR Calvin Johnson, Georgia Tech

The Browns have had such bad luck since returning to football, Vegas actually has them as 3-1 underdogs to win the coin toss at the NFL combine with Tampa for the #3 pick.

That was just a joke, but in all seriousness, it doesn't matter what happens. If Tampa does win the flip, Calvin Johnson is a no-brainer here for the Bucs. He's the #1 player on most draft boards from a straight talent standpoint, and will be a lethal weapon in Gruden's west coast offense from the first day he steps on the field.

4. Cleveland Browns – QB JaMarcus Russell, LSU

Charlie Frye and/or Derek Anderson are not the answer at quarterback. To quote Bob Dole … I know it, you know it, the American people know it. And so does Phil Savage, despite coach Romeo Crennel's half-hearted claims that "the team can win with Charlie".

Phil Savage appears to be in it for the long haul here, and I do also believe that he will aggressively pursue a new signal caller via trade or free agency in the days leading up to the draft. But there are not a lot of options out there. And if he is unable to upgrade the position leading into the draft, I'll guarantee that he will with one of the team's three first day draft picks.

Russell is 6'6, 260 lbs and has the most electric throwing arm the draft has ever seen. Savage's prized jewels on this roster are #80 and #17, and you can rest assured that he is already salivating behind closed doors about the possibility of being able to draft a quarterback prospect of this nature to pair with them.

5. Arizona Cardinals – DT Alan Branch, Michigan

Tough spot for the Cardinals here, with Joe Thomas off the board and Adrian Peterson still on it. Problem for them is, they just dumped a ton of money into Edgerrin James. Presently, Jim Brown in his prime couldn't run effectively behind their mess of an offensive line.

In this scenario, I see them taking the best defensive lineman off the board. And to me, the best lineman in this year's draft is Alan Branch from that state up north. At 6'6, 330 … Branch is a monster in the middle of the defensive line and has the athleticism of a man much smaller than him.

6. Washington Redskins – DE Gaines Adams, Clemson

Not surprisingly, the 'Skins don't pick again until round five, so they had better make this pick count. And to be honest, if things play out like this, I'd be horrified if the 'Skins don't trade down here with Adrian Peterson still on the board, and no other first day picks in hand.

If they don't, they have to go defensive line. They just have to. It was the team's biggest weakness last year, and DE's Phillip Daniels and Andre Carter have seen their better days. Adams has frightening talent, and there are some that feel he could go #2 overall to the Lions.

7. Minnesota Vikings – WR Ted Ginn Jr., Ohio State

In Troy Williamson, Travis Taylor, and Koren Robinson … the Vikings have the worst set of receivers in the league. And they're still happy with Chester Taylor, who they inked to a sizable deal in free agency before last season.

Ted Ginn Jr. is not nearly polished enough to even come close to catching 80 balls at the next level right now, and some scouts claim he's a much better future fit at cornerback. But there are two things Ginn does immediately for you. He gives you one of the top kick and punt returners in all of football. And he changes the way opposing safeties play against your offense. The Vikes will consider Dwayne Jarrett here, but in the end, the heavy handed Brad Childress will be repelled by his showboat antics and inflated ego.

8. Houston Texans – RB Adrian Peterson, Oklahoma

Much maligned a season ago for passing on Reggie Bush to take Mario Williams, the Texans get the last laugh as the top running back in the draft falls to them the following year at #8.

If Peterson can stay healthy, which he's been unable to do in school, there's little not to like about this kid. He has size, speed, and all the pedigree necessary to be a dynamic franchise back.

9. Miami Dolphins – DT Amobi Okoye, Louisville

The Dolphins need help at offensive line, and all over their aging defense, so there is a number of ways they could go with this pick.

In the end, I feel that new coach Cam Cameron will strictly go best player available with his first selection as a head coach. And I believe Okoye to be that player. His performances in the Orange Bowl and Senior Bowl were eye-popping, and the Dolphins are long overdue to put Keith Traylor out to pasture.

10. Atlanta Falcons – S Reggie Nelson, Florida

I think every mock draft I've read so far has the Falcons taking a safety (LSU's LaRon Landry also figures to be a high pick), and for good reason. Lawyer Milloy and Chris Crocker were god-awful against the pass last season for Atlanta.

If Okoye is still on the board, it's hard to see Bobby Petrino passing on him. But I believe he will be gone, and also believe that Nelson is clearly the draft's best secondary prospect.

11. San Francisco 49ers – WR Dwayne Jarrett, USC

Jarrett falls to the Niners, packing his bags and heading north to NoCal to begin what should be a long career with the Niners as QB Alex Smith's new boy-toy. The Niners are very weak at WR, and it's really hard to see anyone but Ginn or Jarrett being the pick here for them at #11.

12. Buffalo Bills – LB Patrick Willis, Ole Miss

The Bills are one of those teams that seem to always pluck guys off the board earlier than projected, as they did last year in the first two rounds with Donte Whitner and John McCargo. Willis is the draft's top middle linebacker, especially now after a ferocious showing in the Senior Bowl. And the Bills had one of the league's worst run defenses with the diminutive London Fletcher in the middle of it.

13. St. Louis Rams – DE Jamaal Anderson, Arkansas

At 6'6, 274 lbs, Anderson is a little light by NFL standards, but few picks have as much potential upside as this talented pass rusher out of Arkansas. The entire Rams front seven is a mess, and Anderson tallied 13.5 sacks and 19.5 tackles for a loss this season for the Razorbacks, having his way at times with Joe Thomas in the Capital One Bowl.

14. Carolina Panthers – S LaRon Landry, LSU

With Will Witherspoon and Dan Morgan both trying to come back from serious injuries, the Panthers biggest need is at linebacker. But this is a very weak linebacker draft, and the Bills took Patrick Willis of the board two picks earlier. They also have a big need at safety with Mike Minter getting old and Shaun Williams being exposed last season. Landry is a very safe pick, was the quarterback and leader of one of college's best defenses this past season, and is a good bet to be an impact player at the next level in the mold of Sean Taylor.

15. Pittsburgh Steelers – OT Levi Brown, Penn State

The Steelers love drafting offensive linemen high, a strategy that has played out pretty well for them over the last fifteen years or so. This unit lost a little of it's "oomph" last season, and center Jeff Hartings just announced his retirement. Knowing the Steelers, they will draft Levi to play right tackle, move Max Starks inside to right guard, pull a center out of their

ass somewhere, and all of them will excel. I wouldn't be surprised if Marshawn Lynch was the pick here either. Screw the Steelers.

16. Green Bay Packers – RB Marshawn Lynch, Cal

This my friends, is what they call a no-brainer. Coming off a 8-8 season, and with Brett Favre back at the helm, the Packers truly believe they will be contenders next season if they can bring in a back to help share the load with Ahman Green. In Lynch, a back with legitimate top five pick talent falls to them, albeit due mostly due to some recent character concerns.

17. Jacksonville Jaguars – LB Paul Posluzny, Penn State

In Posluzny, Jack Del Rio gets a linebacker that reminds him of himself as a player. Maybe only 2nd or 3rd round measurables, but the heart and playmaking ability of a top ten pick. The Jags have a gaping hole at outside 'backer, as Mike Peterson is getting up there, and Pat Thomas and Clint Ingram are shaky on the opposite side.

18. Cincinnati Bengals – DE Adam Carriker, Nebraska

The Bungle defensive line has forever been a mess, and there should be a couple of really solid options on the board for them here in this spot. If the draft plays out as I suggest here, the decision will be between the solid Carriker, who stands almost 6'7 feet tall … and defensive end Charles Johnson from Georgia.

19. Tennessee Titans - WR Dwayne Bowe, LSU

The improving Titans still have some serious needs on defense, but will be unable to pass on the solid Bowe here at #19, who will help aid in the development of QB Vince Young. Bowe is big, physical, runs great routes, has great hands, and stayed all four years at LSU.

20. New York Giants – CB Darelle Revis, Pitt

The Giant secondary was a disaster last year, and here they have the chance to take the first cornerback off the board at #20, something rarely seen in the NFL Draft. Revis is very physical for a 5'11 corner and is an incredible athlete than can also be utilized in the return game.

21. Denver Broncos – DE Charles Johnson, Georgia

The questionable plan to import the entire Browns defensive line was exposed last season, as Courtney Brown got hurt, Gerard Warren remembered he was lazy, and Michael Myers and Ebenezer Ekuban regressed. This is a huge need for the Broncos, and the athletic Johnson's stock is rising.

22. Dallas Cowboys – CB Leon Hall, Michigan

The slide ends for Hall, who I personally feel is really overrated as a prospect. Still, at this

point in the draft, if Hall is still on the board ... Dallas seems like a likely destination for him. The Cowboy secondary was abused late last season. The team likes Anthony Henry as a free safety, and wants to move Roy Williams to strong safety, opening a big hole at cornerback across the field from Terence Newman.

23. Kansas City Chiefs – WR Sidney Rice, South Carolina

Quick! Name the Chiefs top wide receiver. If you guessed Eddie Kennison or Sami Parker, go ahead and give yourself a gold star. It's a huge weakness for this team, especially seeing as how tight end Tony Gonzalez just made the turn and is set to embark on the back nine of his career. Rice is big, fast, has good hands, and gives the Chiefs a go to guy on the outside for the first time in a while.

24. New England Patriots – WR Robert Meacham, Tennessee

Clearly, wide receiver is a big need in New England, and with two first round choices and a deep receiver draft, it's likely that they take one off the board here at #24. In Meacham, they get a kid that had a breakout year for the Vols that has very nice size at 6'2, 210 lbs. Meacham becomes the sixth WR to be picked in the first 24 selections.

25. New York Jets – RB Tony Hunt, Penn State

The Jets also have big needs at defensive tackle and cornerback, but may not be able to pass on a RB here, thinking that the backs they like may be gone by their next selection twelve picks later. In Hunt, they get a solid runner with good size that played well at the Senior Bowl and projects well at the next level. Hunt should team with the diminutive Leon Washington to carry the load for the Jets at running back for years to come.

26. Philadelphia Eagles – LB Lawrence Timmons, Florida State

The Eagles are weak at outside linebacker, and barring one of the top receivers falling here, I'd be surprised if they don't go in that direction with this pick. Much like Kamerion Wimbley a year ago, Timmons was overshadowed by some of his talented Seminole defensive mates this season but has special potential if he continues to develop as he did last season.

27. New Orleans Saints – DT Quinn Pitcock, Ohio State

Blessed with two of the best defensive ends in football in Charles Grant and Will Smith, the Saints are still weak inside on their defensive line, which the Bears exposed in the NFC Championship game. Pitcock is a guy that has slipped out of the first round of most mock drafts, and is a bit undersized. However, my eyes tell me that Pitcock is going go be a very nice player at the next level.

28. New England Patriots – CB Aaron Ross, Texas

With Rodney Harrison likely set to retire, and Asante Samuel about to get the Brinks Truck

backed up for him in free agency, the secondary is as big of an area of need for the Pats as wide receiver. Ross was the 2006 Thorpe Award winner, and had a big year for the Longhorns, solidifying his reputation as a ballhawk.

29. Baltimore Ravens – QB Troy Smith, Ohio State

I'm sorry, this kills me as much as it kills all of you reading this. But I can't get away from this being who the despicable Ravens take off the board here at #29. I can't even comment further on this and I pray that I'm wrong.

30. San Diego Chargers – WR Anthony Gonzalez, Ohio State

I know I'm going to catch some homer heat over having Ginn go #7, and also having Pitcock, Troy, and Gonzo go in the first round, but at this point … I legitimately believe in all of these placements. The Chargers three biggest needs are inside linebacker, safety, and wide receiver. This is an awful draft for inside 'backers and it has just two elite safeties, both long gone. At receiver, Gonzo is one of the next names on the board, and just seems to fit in well with what the Chargers have going on offensively.

31. Chicago Bears – OG Justin Blalock, Texas

Arguably the draft's best available offensive guard, Blalock appears to make sense as a replacement for the geriatric Reuben Brown. Rex Grossman's performance yesterday had to reinforce the Bears desire to continue to commit heavily to the running game and their preferred smash mouth style of play.

32. Indianapolis Colts – CB Daymeion Hughes, Cal

You can never have enough good defensive backs and corner has never been a strength of the defending champion Colts to begin with. Hughes got his hands on all kinds of balls as a senior at Berkley, and projects as one of the top handful of cornerbacks in this year's draft.

SECOND ROUND

33. Oakland – OG Josh Beekman, Boston College
34. Detroit – DE Jarvis Moss, Florida
35. **Cleveland – OT Aaron Sears, Tennessee**
36. Tampa Bay – DE Tim Crowder, Texas
37. NY Jets – CB Marcus Macauley, Fresno State
38. Arizona – OT Tony Ugoh, Arkansas
39. Houston – S Michael Griffin, Texas
40. Miami – LB Brandon Siler, Florida
41. Minnesota – DE Anthony Spencer, Purdue
42. San Francisco – DT Justin Harrell, Tennessee
43. Buffalo – OT Joe Staley, Central Michigan
44. Atlanta – RB Michael Bush, Louisville

45. Carolina – LB Jon Beason, Miami of Florida
46. Pittsburgh – DE Lamaar Woodley, Michigan
47. Green Bay – CB Chris Houston, Arkansas
48. Jacksonville – QB Drew Stanton, Michigan State
49. Cincinnati – TE Zach Miller, Arizona State
50. Tennessee – LB Buster Davis, Florida State
51. NY Giants – C Ryan Kalil, USC
52. St. Louis – S Brandon Merriweather, Miami of Florida
53. Dallas – OG Ben Grubbs, Auburn
54. Kansas City – DT Brandon Mebane, Cal
55. Seattle – CB Fred Bennett, South Carolina
56. Denver – CB David Irons, Auburn
57. Philadelphia – S Eric Weddle, Utah
58. New Orleans – LB H.B. Blades, Pitt
59. NY Jets – DT Marcus Thomas, Florida
60. New England – RB Brian Leonard, Rutgers
61. Baltimore – DE Quentin Moses, Georgia
62. San Diego – LB Earl Everett, Florida
63. Chicago – TE Greg Olsen, Miami of Florida
64. Tampa Bay – S Aaron Rouse, Virginia Tech

THIRD ROUND

67. Cleveland – DE Ray McDonald, Florida

FOURTH ROUND

100. Cleveland – OG Tim Duckworth, Auburn

FIFTH ROUND

131. Cleveland – RB Antonio Pittman, Ohio State

SIXTH ROUND

164. Cleveland – DT Jay Alford, Penn State