With the NFL draft merely weeks away, the propaganda wars are in full swing. Teams bring in players and express interest in them precisely because they have none. A team's draft plans are guarded as if they are nuclear secrets so pay no attention to the comments emanating for example from the Cleveland Browns' Mike Holgrem about Florida quarterback Tim Tebow.

Tebow had what the experts call a lousy combine. Apparently they didn't like his throwing motion which is not up to the exacting standards of one of the most in-exacting professional leagues. That caused Tebow to re-tool the motion with the help of various former NFL types.

In his recent pro day, which is basically a personal workout conducted under more comfortable surroundings, Tebow wowed the former critics for, I guess, showing he had the capacity to learn and improve as if that wasn't known already.

Holmgren has talked up Tebow a bit but cryptically noted that he thinks that the new motion will give way to the old motion under the pressure of a game. It's like trying to change a golf swing. You can accomplish much on the range but there's something about taking it to the course when you're 180 yards out on your third shot on a par four that makes you revert back to the familiar if less effective motion.

At this point no player in this entire draft is eliciting more polarizing comments about his ability than Tebow. The theories are many: If he really was a NFL quarterback he wouldn't have played his senior year at Florida but instead would have entered the draft. He played in a

gimmicky offense. He can't take the snap from behind center. He's too slow and he can't throw.

In the last few days even current NFL players are weighing in and not very nicely, I might add. Miami Dolphins' quarterback Chad Henne's considered opinion was short and sweet: “My judgment is that he's not an NFL quarterback. I'll leave it at that.” Of course Henne, showing all the courage of his convictions you'd probably expect and perhaps being reminded of his own spotty NFL existence, backed off those comments saying, laughably, that he was cut off and didn't get to finish his analysis. Usually when someone says “I'll leave it at that” it's the end of the conversation, but whatever. Henne now says that Tebow's a swell guy.

But is he a NFL quarterback? Jacksonville Jaguars' offensive guard, Uche Nwaneri, apparently doesn't think so. In a widely reported story from this past February Nwaneri posted a message on the team's message board saying, essentially, that he's sick of the folks in Jacksonville thinking that Tebow will come in and save the franchise.

Nwaneri relates a conversation he had with a bank teller who, after suggesting that the Jags should draft Tebow, told the clerk to explain to him exactly what football skills Tebow brings that would get the team to the next level. The teller was silent. Then Nwaneri went on to name the 5 things he felt fans should know before they think Tebow will be “Jesus in teal.” It was the usual stuff: he can't throw, he can't read coverages, the wildcat formation doesn't work in the league, he can't take a snap from center and, oh yea, did I mention he can't throw?

Curiously, though, when Nwaneri was challenging the bank teller, he told him not to specifically talk about Tebow's intangibles, such as leadership because, I guess, it doesn't further the overall narrative.

But this isn't something to be overlooked. The image I have of Tebow is mostly of him helping the Gators paste the Ohio State Buckeyes in the national championship when Tebow was a freshman. That wound may never heal but that doesn't particularly cloud my judgment on Tebow. The kid has a NFL future.People making a lot more money than me get paid exactly to determine who is NFL caliber and not so I bow to their judgment. But it's worth noting that these people, in the form of NFL scouts, team presidents, general managers and coaches, have a success rate that rivals the average person's ability to fill out a NCAA basketball bracket correctly, and that's in a good year. Half of them would still find reasons to not draft Joe Montana.

Tebow is a curious case undoubtedly. But as the NFL-types pick and poke at his every flaw they do risk missing the overall picture. Tebow is a winner. He finds a way to get things done. He has an uncommon passion for his sport and works harder than nearly everyone else.Here's a tip free of charge for anyone responsible for doing hiring in his or her organization: hire for passion first. I'll take the candidate with passion for the business over the candidate with better technical skills every time. The passionate person will learn the technical nuances. The technician that lacks passion always will.

The case for and against Tebow reminds me of another player that too many NFL executives missed on because he didn't necessarily fit a predefined picture of what a NFL player at his position looks like. In 1988 Chris Spielman from Ohio State certainly seemed like one of the top, if not the top, linebacker in college, at least to my untrained eyes. But of course the problem was that he was only 6'0" 247 pounds coming out of college, too small supposedly for the pro game.That year, the league's number one pick belonged to Atlanta and with it they chose Aundray Bruce out of Auburn. You couldn't get a more prototypical linebacker. On the strength of being the league's number one pick, Bruce actually lasted 7 years despite a career that had teams hoping that eventually he'd become mediocre. He didn't make a Pro Bowl. Wasn't named to a league All Pro team even once.

But there's more. The next linebacker taken was Ken Harvey, by Phoenix. Harvey wasn't a bust by any means. In truth, he and Spielman had similar careers, so we'll give Phoenix a pass for taking Harvey instead of Spielman. But let's move down a few more spots in the draft, shall we? The Houston Oilers had the 20th pick that season and didn't get their selection to the podium in time. The Browns pounced and submitted the name "Clifford Charlton." Houston then took Lorenzo White. Bruce was a bust because Atlanta could have drafted almost any other linebacker and he would have had a similar career. Charlton was a bust because he may have been one of the worst selections of all time. He played exactly two seasons. You could attribute that to the knee injury he suffered, but other players have come back from that. The truth is that Charlton was a bad pick, perhaps the worst and the injury has nothing to do with it.

In the second round, Atlanta had the first pick and again went linebacker and again blew it, selecting Marcus Cotton out of USC. Cotton lasted four seasons, including a half year in Cleveland, but basically was Clifford Charlton but with a career that was twice as long. With the next pick the Detroit Lions selected Spielman. In his 10-year career, Spielman made the Pro Bowl four times and was named to various All Pro teams in five different seasons.What Spielman did prove, ultimately, is that the intangibles matter as much if not more than physical size. As passionate a player as you'll ever see outside of Tebow, Spielman turned that passion into an uncanny ability to make plays. It was true in high school, it was true in college and it was certainly true in the the NFL. Spielman didn't have a Hall of Fame career, but what he did have was the kind of career that ought to make NFL personnel types rethink all their facts and figures.

They won't. It's not what they do. Every draft is filled with players that were overlooked by team after team because they didn't measure up in one way or another physically. All these players do is prove that with heart and passion the game is about far more than a 40-yard dash at the combine.I suspect that when it comes to Tebow he probably doesn't measure up in a way that, say, Chad Henne did. But I also suspect that 10 years from now and looking back Tebow will have had a better career than Henne mainly because what Tebow has and Henne lacks is something that can't be taught.

Whether else you might think about Tebow, don't overlook the fact that he has an "it" factor that makes those around him better. I'm not suggesting that the Browns move heaven and earth to draft him as much as I am suggesting that if he ends up in a Cleveland uniform it won't be the

worst draft mistake this franchise has made. The legacies of Charlton and Mike Junkin will forever loom large.