Wow. Can you say intense?

We have waited months for the Browns to pick a player with the 6th pick in the draft and then the balloon deflates with the trade down just as we were about to be 'rewarded'. Then after you finally regroup and accept the Browns are building for the future since AJ Green and Patrick Peterson were gone, you start putting air back in the balloon only to have the balloon explode all together with the pick of a 6-3 335lb DT?? I know the pick caught you off guard and that is understandable, but let's talk about it and begin to break it down.

Trades

First let's talk about the picks the Browns were able to pick up. The first trade the Browns made trading away the 6th pick in exchange for the 27th pick also netted them a second and fourth round pick this year. The Browns also were given a first and fourth round pick next year. In the second trade the Browns traded away their 3rd round pick this year in order to move up 6 spots and Draft DT Phil Taylor from Baylor. The Taylor pick will probably be most people's issue and we will get into him as a player but first let's talk about the draft currency.

Some teams like the Patriots and Eagles tend to collect extra picks year in and year out. This serves a couple of purposes. First and foremost they use the picks as currency so if there is a player that they really covet they can and will target a specific player just as Heckert did in giving up a third round pick in order to pick Taylor. Using the picks like this allows a team to have a really small list of players ranked at specific points in the draft, targeting those players and trading picks to get exactly who they want instead of basically being held hostage to other

teams boards. It is a fairly aggressive approach because you are calling your shot instead of just taking who ever falls. The key to using this type of strategy is accumulating the picks that will be needed in order to target your players. The way you get the extra picks is to have good enough scouting to realize when you can trade back and still get a good player to justify the risk all while accumulating picks. The object is to come away from the draft with good enough players to satisfy your roster needs but still ensure flexibility for future drafts. This allows your team many more choices when you are on the clock come draft day.

Over time the Eagles and Patriots seem to be the best at it and it seems as if Tom Heckert is following the path he learned in Philadelphia. I expect the Browns to turn that 1st round pick from Atlanta that will probably be a pick towards the end of the round into more picks either for next year or beyond. Giving yourself multiple picks in the top 64 picks is the best way to ensure roster depth long term and not face cap issues or having to pay older players more than they are worth. Most people understand the trade was made for the future but you need to understand that if this philosophy, if executed correctly, is for an extended “future” much beyond next year.

Player

Phil Taylor is what I call a roller coaster player. He was a player who was a big time recruit going to Penn State then got in trouble for an altercation at a frat party and was suspended and later dismissed from the team. He then transferred to Baylor and once he started playing games again he seemed as if he was just going through the motions while letting his playing weight get up to around 360lbs. He later let his weight get up to 380lbs. Then he went on a trip to Africa with some of his teammates and kind of had an awakening. He said he was humbled and had a new appreciation of the gifts and privileges he was blessed with and dedicated himself to being the best he could be on an off of the field. He lost 50lbs and increased his stamina which manifested itself with a huge jump in production with his totals going from 25 tackles, 2.5 TFL, .5 sacks to 2010: 62 tackles, 7 TFL, 2 sacks, FF. The weight lost gave him newfound agility and quickness again and allowed him to play with a high motor for an entire game. He very rarely even came out his senior year.

The Good

Taylor is a massive man who right now is proportioned exactly how you want a power DT to be. He has a thick upper and lower body but doesn’t have a Dunlop tire hanging over his belt loop.

He is explosive off of the snap and showed unusual stamina his senior year. He is ox strong which was verified by his 31 reps of 225lbs at the combine. He has an extremely long arms (34in) and huge hands (10¾) to go along with great athleticism for a 335lb man. He has a 30in vertical and was clocked at a 5.09 in the 40 which are great numbers for someone his size. He has an explosive first step and engages with tremendous power. As you would assume with someone his size, his best pass rush is a power bull rush and club move. This year he displayed a great motor, getting to plays all over the field and pursuing plays down field as well.

Cons

Whenever someone is as big as Taylor weight concerns will always be there. He let himself get up to 380lbs at one point and has the potential to eat his way out of the league if he doesn't stay on top of his diet. He got in trouble in his freshman year at Penn State and was charged with aggravated assault which was later dropped to simple assault. The charges led to him being suspended from the team and later dismissed so anytime a person has a history with violence off of the field it raises a concerns. He has not had any "trouble" since and he says it was an immature mistake made when he was young, which could be true, but you at least need to be aware of his past and be on the alert.

Football wise a few things bother me. The first is the lack of any other pass rush move except the power bull rush and club I see him do. He will need more than that in the NFL to be effective. He also looses leverage too much by letting players play lower than him.

My biggest concern of all has to do with the reported medical issues he has. There were medical reports out there that he now says are not true (and Heckert said the same), but that respected people signed their name that say Taylor had a medical condition with his feet that caused the bones to start growing together. The reports said that it was a condition that could not be fixed by surgery and it was an issue of his pain tolerance. Rob Rang of NFLDraftScout.com said that he did verify with sources that teams were red flagging him because of these issues but Taylor and Heckert say he is fine. If he is fine then O.K. If he has the condition but doesn't get any pain from it, then that is a totally different can of worms. I would like to know what is true about the situation before I just ignore the multiple reports. Believing teams is hard to do when they are also saying that DaQuan Bower's knee is not an issue but that seems bogus because he is not second round player on tape and teams are staying away from him like he is the stinky kid in school. I don't think we will get any different answers other than the one we are getting from the Browns but you can call me a little skeptical after dealing with Courtney Brown.

Thoughts

This pick should be reinforcement to everyone that the Browns are moving to a power 4-3 and not a Tampa 2 gap penetrate 4-3. The Browns plan to be stout through the middle with big DTs and a big MLB. Think of a 4-3 like Jacksonville had clogging the middle with John Henderson and Marcus Stroud. After the draft I will get into more specifics on the defense. All good teams build a defense from inside out so the pick is right in Heckert's comfort zone.

Some players who the Browns might have interest in drafting for the second round are Aaron Williams, Ras I Dowling, Brandon Harris, Randall Cobb, Titus Young, DaQuan Bowers, Brooks Reed, Justin Houston, Mason Foster, Martez Wilson.