Well fans, the 2012 NFL draft is in the rear view mirror and it has been a long journey getting there. The journey started with the Senior Bowl and ended on Saturday night when the Browns made their final selection in the 7th round.

For me personally the process itself is an extremely long and grueling one because I spend so much time studying players and writing articles about my opinions that I end up literally being consumed by it. Spending most of your free time for a few months going through a process that you ultimately have no control of is really the definition of insanity and, believe me, I feel plenty insane by the time the last pick is made.

This particular draft was even worse because it has really been like two separate events. The first event was a long process of watching and internally debating on what type of player Robert Griffin III was. After I made the final determination of what I thought of him and whether I wanted to draft him I starting consuming myself with the two part question of “will the Browns need to trade for him and what I would give up to get him”.

Once the Redskins outbid Cleveland I began what seemed like a whole different draft process as I turned my attention to answering the question of who to take with the 4th pick. If you have been following the series you already know the answers I formed but in the process of coming to that conclusion I consumed myself with the continued study of the rest of the draft field which led us up to round one on Thursday.

I won’t get deep into round one because I have already written a day one recap but I want to revisit some of my opinions as part my draft execution topi. The article will also talk about the prospects Cleveland took in rounds 2-7.

Execution

Let me start by once again saying I have loved the way Tom Heckert has handled the draft from an execution standpoint during his first two drafts, so it makes me a bit uncomfortable bashing him. But that is basically what I am about to do.

I don't have a problem with the way the draft was handled on Saturday because at that point most people know that the players being picked generally are considered 'depth' players because they do something well but have holes in other areas. They are usually not counted on to come in as starters even though some of them have starting potential. As a general rule teams take players after the 3rd round who can add depth to their roster so taking players with some red flags or players that play positions in which you already have solid starters is not a big deal.

But for teams who have struggled to win games and have rosters with big deficiencies in talent, the first two days of the draft are supposed to yield starters, and in general you take the best players who can immediately help your team fill needs. Getting players that can start and contribute right away is paramount, especially for teams like the Cleveland Browns that field a team with glaring talent deficiencies in certain areas.

That is why I have a problem with the way Tom Heckert handled the first 3 rounds of the draft. He started out trading 3 picks in order to move up one spot and draft a potential workhorse RB and, although I didn't advocate taking the RB in the first place, I at least understand where he was coming from. I don't think he needed to do that in order to upgrade the RB position but if you have the chance to ensure getting the number 1 player on your board I can understand that move.

The next pick is really where he started to lose me because I feel like at the point they knew that they were going to pull the trigger on drafting a 28 year old QB the Browns should have also decided to gamble a bit more. There were 3 options that seemed better than taking Weeden at 22.

The first was a trade back, the second was selecting another player and trying to get him at 37, and the third was selecting another player and trading back up from 37 to draft Weeden. I know those options seem like a big risk if you think you are going to lose out on a franchise QB, but it really wasn't that big of risk and if they Browns really thought Weeden was a franchise QB they would have NEVER passed him up at the top of the draft.

There was clearly no team that would have taken Weeden between 22 and 37 and if you are telling me that a team would have traded up ahead of Cleveland for him I will simply laugh at the notion that a team would bypass him the first time around on the clock but yet trade away another high pick to draft him.

Sorry.. I just don't see it. *Maybe* if he was a 22 year old project, but no matter what you tell me to sell that idea I would have a hard time buying any team would give up anything resembling a high pick to trade up for a 28 year old QB who may not initially be the best QB on their roster.

Once the Dolphins had Tannehill and the Redskins had RG3 no other team even made sense for Weeden because he isn't a guy who has 'time' to do anything else but play immediately.

Once Cleveland drafted Weeden at 22 it didn't shock me that they picked a starting RT with 37, and if you read my position preview for OT you already know I think Schwartz is an upgrade over what we have, so I won't fault them for the guy they got. If he is the best guy for them at RT then so be it because I agree with the need and he is better than who we have.

Now to my last major issue with the 2012 draft which is the decision to draft a backup DT in a draft position that should be reserved for a player you hope to eventually start. I like the fact that Cleveland traded down when they knew they wanted to draft DT John Hughes but I am floored by the fact the Browns would draft a player at a position that has two YOUNG starters who are really good players.

I understand that after day one I put in my recap not to rule out taking a defensive player on the 2nd day of the draft, but I at least hoped the player would be able to start, and we all know the only way Hughes is starting would be injury.

Ok, I am done bitching about a 3rd round player that at the end of the day will help the Browns depth and who will probably help keep starting DT Rubin and Taylor healthier, but I honestly expected the Browns to get a potential starter with a high 3rd round pick, I guess if the LB they selected with the pick they received in the trade turns into a starter my point is irrelevant but regardless it didn't sit well with me…… I voiced my displeasure and it's time to move on so I can talk about the players selected in rounds 2-7.

Players

2nd Round pick **#37** RT **Mitchell Schwartz** Cal **(6-5, 318lbs)**

Schwartz is a player I previewed in my offensive tackle preview and I initially projected the Browns to pick. As I wrote in the preview I went back and edited the pick before I published and changed it to Bobby Massie because I thought the upside of Massie was higher than Schwartz. Understand that I believe in Schwartz's talent and he will be an upgrade at the position, which is why if you read my pre-draft article Time to Execute I actually picked the Browns to take Schwartz in my 13 for 13 section. I won't spend a lot of time on him as you can read what I put in the preview but just know that the guy is a really good run blocker with a tireless work ethic.

I also want to note that Schwartz really jumped out at me during Senior Bowl week. I knew who he was prior to that but watching him handle himself that week is what sold me on him as a player. I saw him block everyone down there and the most impressive thing about him to me was his relentlessness. He never gave up and fought through the whistle on every play. He is quick enough to handle speed rushers and strong enough to mash in the run game.

3rd Round pick **#87** DT **John Hughes** Cincinnati **(6-3, 309lbs)**

John Hughes is a player I went back and watched as much as I could after he was picked and I got to see him play UConn and Syracuse. In those games he looked really strong and active. He never stayed blocked and made plays in the backfield in both games. I then went to the stat sheet and saw those were two of his best games production wise on the year and you could tell on film that he was really productive in those games.

Hughes is a player that has started for two years now but prior to his senior year he was thought to be a player who took plays off and many times went through the motions. At some point his senior year he must have asked himself what he was going to do when he graduated in a few months and decided football was going to be it, because he turned up his intensity and production finishing his senior year with 51 tackles 12.5 tackles for loss and 5 sacks after only having 4.5 TFL his junior year and zero sacks.

If the Browns can keep his switch in the on position instead of the off position Hughes has the chance to be an impact rotational player. If not he will be a DT going through the motions and collecting a paycheck, but the good thing is that he does have the ability to deliver if he makes the right choice on the player he wants to be in the NFL.

4th Round pick **#100** WR **Travis Benjamin** Miami **(5-10, 172lbs)** pick **#120** LB **James Michael-Johnson**
Nevada
(6-1, 241lbs)

Travis Benjamin is a slight built WR with electric speed. He has the type of speed (4.3) that makes fast people call him fast. He is a very light player so if you get your hands on him you can easily win the battle, but if you don't his quickness and speed can easily leave you standing there. Benjamin doesn't have a ton of production but no WR at Miami has put up consistent numbers while QB Jacory Harris has been under center, so I am not sure if that is the best matrix to gauge what Benjamin can be in the NFL.

Benjamin is a player who also has a lot of history returning punts and kickoffs over his career, but don't confuse him with Arkansas Joe Adams or DeSean Jackson because I actually wouldn't consider that one of his best roles on a team. He doesn't have that natural 'make you miss' lateral agility which is apparent from his stats. He only has 1 career TD (against Ohio State) in his 130 plus returns, so although he is lighting fast and can field punts and kickoffs I would not necessarily consider him a dynamic return man.

I expect the Browns to bring him in and use him as a player out of the slot which will allow him to be off the line of scrimmage so he can use his quickness without having to get off of press coverage at the line of scrimmage. He will help keep DBs honest because with his speed you

can never lose track of him. He also catches the ball very well over his shoulder so that will also help make him a player who tests the defense vertically and not just horizontally.

LB James Michael-Johnson is a player who is a four year starter in college with history playing both the strong side LB and MLB where he has started the last two years. He is a LB with good ability in all aspects of the game with plus ability to chase sideline to sideline. From my studies of Cleveland's Dick Jauron defense, Johnson looks like he has the ability to play the weak side LB position. He doesn't cover well enough in man coverage to play on the strong side in my opinion, and he isn't a good enough MLB to cause D'Qwell Jackson to move to the weak side, but Johnson is still versatile enough to be a back up at multiple positions.

I think Johnson has the correct amount of speed and pop to be a good weak side LB in this defense. The only aspect of his game that I would consider truly in the average to below average column is his nastiness. He in no way shape or form shies away from contact and he is a solid downhill player against the run, but I think he needs to get meaner and more physical in his overall play. In general Johnson has the skill set to be a starting LB in the NFL.

5th Round pick **#160** OG **Ryan Miller** Colorado **(6-7, 321lbs)**

Ryan Miller is a 4 year starter in the trenches with experience at guard and tackle. He started the last two years at guard and as you can see from his height/weight he is a huge lineman. He is a player who was a big time recruit coming out of high school after being named his state's Gatorade player of the year and he had offers to play at almost every big time college in the country. I won't comment too much on his play because I haven't seen him too much with my own eyes but from what I read he is a great run blocker who has a nasty disposition when blocking. With his experience inside and out at the worst he will be a solid backup at both guard and tackle and but I think he will eventually out class one of Cleveland guards and take a starting position.

6th Round pick **#204** LB **Emmanuel Acho** Texas **(6-2, 238lbs)** pick **#205** DT **Billy Winn** Boise St. **(6-4, 295lbs)**

Acho is a player that really seemed to figure things out his senior year as he led the team with

130 tackles. He has experience playing all 3 LB spots and will be a valuable backup because of it. He has good enough speed (4.68) to cover some TEs and bigger RBs but doesn't change direction real well so he won't be able to play the more athletic pass catchers.

He can probably backup all 3 LB spots but he may be best suited to play the strong side LB in Cleveland's defense. Acho is a player with a reputation of having a really high work ethic so he may end up challenging for a starting spot down the road because I am sure he will put in the time to get better as well as thoroughly learn his opponents. At worst Acho will be a versatile backup and special teams contributor.

Billy Winn is going to be one of those NFL players that either blossoms into an impact player or constantly teases coaches with his potential. He has some really good individual traits but he only matches those traits together with passion some of the times. If he did it on a regular basis he would have been a high pick in my opinion. He also has an injury history that may have scared some teams off.

Winn is the type of DT who plays his best moving forward. He has history playing DE and DT in college so he also brings versatility. At times on film he seems unblockable because he has really good quickness and can get shoulder to shoulder with offensive guards quickly. Sometimes on film it looks like he knows the snap count but if you look at his 1.6 second 10 yard split you understand he is just really quick. He may struggle to hold against a double team but he also shows the ability to split them at times.

Initially I expect Winn to try and carve out a role in the nickel package but without a doubt he has the ability to be a starting lineman in the NFL if he can stay healthy and motivated. He has the talent to end up being a diamond in the rough type of draftee.

7th Round pick **#245** CB **Trevin Wade** Arizona **(5-10, 192lbs)** pick **#247** TE/FB **Brad Smelley** Alabama
(6-2, 238lbs)

Trevin Wade is a player I have seen up and down play from. I have seen him play really well at times locking WRs down in tight man to man coverage and I have also seen him lose confidence after getting beat which led to more getting beat. He is a CB that has good

quickness and change of direction but he isn't fast so he needs to be perfect with his technique because he lacks recovery speed. Wade doesn't shy away from tacking in run support but he often shoots knees to tackle and he can be stiff armed because his head is low.

Wade is a player I expect to earn a special teams role and play the slot early in his career. I don't think he is a starting CB in the NFL but he should be able to keep a job in the league as a 3rd or 4th CB.

Brad Smelley is a classic H-back in Cleveland's offense. He has hands like glue but he is not big enough to be a regular inline blocker in the NFL. He has FB size with TE skills. Smelley will catch everything thrown his way and when I watched Senior Bowl practices you could see that because he made difficult catches look routine. He doesn't have the speed to challenge defenses deep but he will effectively wham block from the H-back position and he will catch the ball when he is thrown a pass. He is the type of player that will become a core special teams member and there is no doubt he will carve out a role for himself on this team. I expect him to take over the role Alex Smith played last year as a TE/FB on the roster.

Summary

Out of the 11 players Cleveland drafted in this year's draft I think only one will really struggle to make the roster and that is Trevin Wade. It will really depend on what position James Dockery plays in the secondary as well as Cleveland's stance on aging CB Sheldon Brown, but Wade may have to be a player they put on the practice squad.

I think they have the potential to have 3 immediate starters in Richardson, Weeden, and Schwartz. Some may say Weeden isn't an automatic starter but we all know that when you have a 2nd year starter like Colt McCoy and then you draft a QB in the first round that team thinks the draftee is better than the incumbent.

The Weeden situation is amplified by the fact that he will turn 29 a few weeks into the regular season and if you say his age doesn't matter I think you are mistaken.

I am a huge fan also, but the reality of his age is really a simple one. No athlete can just escape father time. He can't just put aging on hold because his body hasn't been dealing with the rigors of football that whole time. 35 is 35. It is a simple truth that it takes a 35 year old body longer to heal and recover than a 25 year old body and Weeden will be 35 in 6 years not 13 like most QB get before they reach that marker, so in my opinion his age does matter in the big picture.

Weeden is operating on a much smaller time line so he must play now. Just think if he is really good and he doesn't play right away. That would be an even smaller window for good QB play. I understand that while in Seattle Mike Holmgern drafted Dan McGwire in the first round of a NFL draft and the kid never earned the right to play, but the situation was much different because McGwire was young and had they had time to see if he was going to develop.

Look, my stance is simple about Weeden, I am not down on him as a player you can read my QB preview on TCF
and the preview I wrote on
GreyMattersSports
.
I think he has a rocket arm and can be a good NFL QB. I hated the fact Cleveland took him when they did and failed to capitalize on an opportunity to improve the talent around him even more but I think he has a chance to be a solid player. Management felt he was better than McCoy so they drafted him and he will be 29 early in the season, he has to start playing right now……period.

In general I am calling this draft "Ground and Pound" because it was apparent once you analyzed the draft picks Cleveland plans on pounding the ball and playing good defense as a blue print to victories. Not signing any free agent WRs combined with no WR draft picks capable of starting shows the Browns are being pretty clear with their intentions.

When the dust settles on their 3 yards and a cloud of dust games if the scoreboard says we have more points I won't care how we got there……and I mean 100% of that statement.

The great thing about being a Browns fan as well as a draft junkie is I can spend Thursday, Friday, and Saturday pissed off at the world when the Browns don't pick players I think they should, but once the last pick is made and I am done muttering to myself I can let the fan side of

me kick in and begin to simply support the players we did get.

I will stand up and say it again so everyone is clear; I had major problems with the way the draft was executed this year but I also understand Cleveland got a RB who, barring injury, should carry the offense for the next 4-6 years, and they got some trench players to help compete in our division so I can walk away with hope for the future.

And if the cane yielding QB turns out to be a player who brings us a legitimate passing game to go along with what on paper looks like a top notch running game I will be a happy fan eating a bit of crow for my criticism on where we took him……But you know we won't have those answers for months so I am sure you will hear me gripe a bit more from now until them. Buy some some ear muffs if you don't want to hear it.

In closing I want to thank everyone who made the journey that is the draft series in this its second year. I understand in this day and age of internet experts and draft junkies there are plenty of opinions and stances out there so I thank you for listening to mine.

I also want to thank Brian McPeek, Rich and TCF for allowing me the opportunity to write on the site because it gives me the chance to come in contact with many more people than I would any other way.

Until next year that is a wrap for the series, if you want to contact me with some comments or complaints on the series feel free to email me at jjta1975@gmail.com "> jjta1975@gmail.com and until next time…….. Go Browns!

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