

# Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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## Terry Fontenot Arthur Smith

### Weekday Press Conference

TERRY FONTENOT: All right, guys. First of all, we appreciate you being here today. We appreciate you guys being patient with us. I know we did this kind of at a different time than we usually do it, and we may have changed. We appreciate you guys adapting.

I kind of want to thank some people in the building. We've had a very productive, effective, efficient process getting prepared for the draft. There's a lot of people that have a lot to do with that, starting with administration, all the work they've done and continue to do with the salary cap, getting us in position to do some business, the pro scouting staff has done an exceptional job working along with the coaches and bringing in players that fit the ethos, that fit the character, the culture, and they've allowed us to fill some needs and check some boxes heading into the draft.

I want to thank the college staff. Again, they've been on this process for over a year, and they've done an exceptional job in an uncommon year, in a unique year, and they still figure out a way to get their jobs done, and they've operated and got us all the information we need.

I want to thank IT, analytics, development. We can't go through every name, but you guys are a big part of this, a big part of this process, and also the coaching staff. They have a lot on their plate. They have a lot to do, but they've done a good job working along with the pro scouts, the college scouts, giving clear visions of the types of players that are going to fit here, and they've evaluated a lot of players. This is a very inclusive process, and there are no egos involved.

It's our process. It's going to be our draft. It's our free agents. It's our team. So we appreciate everyone, and we feel very excited and prepared going into the draft.

**Q. Good morning, gentlemen. Terry, this is for you. I wonder if you could just walk me through the evaluation process. How many prospects did you start**



**looking at, dwindle down to interviews, dwindle down to how many will be seriously considered at the number four spot.**

TERRY FONTENOT: Overall, when you go through, it really is a narrowing process, and you're constantly trimming the fat. You start off with a big number -- I can't give you the exact number, but you start off with a big number, and you get your board down to -- I want to say our board is probably about 150 now.

You go through that process, it starts off with the college scouts. They have several evaluations on the players. Then you get the coaches involved, and they evaluate the players. We get meetings together, and we discuss the players and discuss the fits. You get the medical staff involved, and there's some players that might not fit medically. So it's really a narrowing process.

I would say right now we're probably down to right around in that range of 150.

**Q. And do you know who you are picking at No. 4, and if so, when did you come to that decision?**

TERRY FONTENOT: There's still variables involved. We know the players that we will be discussing there, and we can all anticipate the first three picks, but it has to actually happen. Then from that point, we have to weigh the options in terms of, if we trade back and compare it to the player we could get at 4, or if we trade back, what would be the value?

So we have to weigh all those different variables and those different scenarios. So we know the players we're talking about, and we've gone through the different things that can happen, but you never know what's going to happen at that exact moment, but we know the players that we're talking about.

**Q. My first one's for Terry. You've already mentioned this, but I wanted to go into more detail about the salary cap. You all have already had to work pretty hard just to get under the cap before the start of the late year. I was just curious what more needs to be done in terms of signing this draft class. Maybe if you could talk in maybe general terms about what the next steps are.**



TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, you're right. It really is, and I respect the work that you guys have done on this because it is true. It's a challenge, and we knew it was going to be a challenge, and we're fine with that. It's just we have to continue going through that process. We still have work to do just to be able to sign our draft class and be able to operate throughout the year.

So it's a challenge. There are different options we can look at. We look at it, we're not looking at it as a negative. We think it's an opportunity. We're excited about what we're going to do. We're going to have a big rookie class, maybe the biggest rookie class we're going to have here, and we're excited about that.

We're going to bring in a lot of young hungry guys. We're going to have clear visions for what they are, and they'll have chances to compete early on. We've had unselfish players that have taken pay cuts and players that have restructured. It's been a good opportunity for us, I believe, but Tory, you're right, we still have a lot of work to do.

**Q. My second question is for Arthur. I know you said the first time we talked to you that you loathe group think. I feel as though, when it comes to the draft, it has to come to a certain head, and there has to be a certain element where everybody's on the same page. Do you feel like you've reached that juncture, or are there still discussions between coaching staff and general manager with Terry?**

ARTHUR SMITH: We've got a great process with Terry. When he opened this thing up with his opening statement, it's the truth. We do a lot of group think, and we've had a great set of opinions. You have your college scouts, who have been working tirelessly. They don't get a lot of the credit. They're on the road. They bring in all the information, and it gets filtered in. The process has been great. Everybody has a voice -- coaches, scouts, everybody in those rooms -- and it helps.

It helps to find the guys that we want to bring to the Falcons. We've got to have conviction about it, and we can have disagreement, but when we walk out of there, we set it, and we understand we have a clear vision. We come to consensus in a room, and we feel great about where we put the players on the board, but that was a big part of our process, and we stuck to it. That's the way we want it to be.

**Q. For Terry and Arthur, can you reflect on how the collaboration has been for you all over this predraft period for the betterment of the franchise and touch on what has been the role of Arthur Blank in this process.**

TERRY FONTENOT: The collaboration has been excellent, and I would say, starting with the man to my left, he's obviously very smart, and he has strong opinions, and yet he doesn't have an ego, or if he has an ego, I haven't seen it yet in all our time together. He's a great listener, and he does a great job, whether it's myself, like you said, or the coaches and the scouts, in terms of listening and allowing everyone to have a voice. It's been great collaboration.

If we're making decisions on anything, major decisions on players or anything in life, I want to talk to him about it because he has a good way of looking at things. So it's been excellent. It's been exciting. We know it starts at the top with that, and it's been exceptional.

And you asked about Arthur's role?

**Q. Yes. I also wanted to hear from Arthur on the collaboration too.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, Terry pretty much said it, and it's the same way I feel about Terry. Both of us, this transition has been unbelievable. We obviously didn't know each other well coming into it, but I feel very fortunate to be working with Terry. Both of us listen. We listen to the other coaches, the other scouts, and that's what we want. We mean what we say, and that part has been great.

Obviously, we're excited going into tomorrow night and really throughout the weekend. It's not just about the fourth pick or whether we move back, it's about all the players we bring in here. That's the heart of your team. A lot of attention gets put on the first pick -- I agree it drives rating, it drives clips, it's exciting -- but the reality is we're going to bring nine-plus football players in here for the first time to be part of this culture in year one, so we're excited about that.

**Q. The second part is what was Arthur Blank's role? Scott Pioli described the six years he was here that he helped you all along the way, but he didn't get in the way of the decision-making process?**

ARTHUR SMITH: That's been his role the entire time. He runs the whole AMB Sports and Entertainment. He's been awesome. We've leaned on him for multiple -- whether it's a role as a mentor in some of the hard decisions we've had to make so far. He's going to ask questions, and we've got to have the answers of why we want to do stuff. That's true in any business. We all have bosses, and that's the way it should be.

Like everything, there's a lot of rumors that go around, and

people want to build up these narratives of this or that, and Scott Pioli can speak on Scott Pioli's experience, great. Terry and I will speak on our experiences. That's all we know in that role. People want to talk about things in the past, great. They can shed a light, and that's true of whatever time that was.

So it's been great. He's been great to talk to about a number of subjects, not just the draft.

TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, it's been great. He's given us, I would say, unwavering support, and like Arthur said, when we want to just -- obviously, he has a lot of experience and a lot in business in general, so we can discuss anything with him in all aspects of the business. So he's always available for that. He's given us every resource we need, and he's empowered us and trusts us to make the right decisions.

**Q. First question for you, following up the earlier on the trades thing, what are you seeing in general on the benefits for the issues with trading down to accumulate assets to help build the roster? And kind of going with that, what is the point at which you would sort of cut things off and say no more, we've just got to make a pick?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, yeah, and it's really a case by case where we have to weigh it if a team, wherever that team is, and the assets and the draft capital that team would give up, and we have to look at the player we would get it for compared to us anticipating the players that we'll be looking at at that later pick, and then obviously taking into consideration the future picks that we would get.

So it's really a weighing process at that point, and we have, we've talked to every general manager, and that's just normal prior to the draft to communicate with general managers and see what teams are willing to do. But some things will only happen on the clock, so we'll be prepared, and we'll have went through the scenarios, but it's just the weighing process in terms of what we would get compared to the player that we think would be there.

**Q. And then second question for Arthur. There's a saying in sports, Coaches want to win today, general managers want to win tomorrow. The two often have a different eye on things. I'm sure you both know there's two players in this draft who undoubtedly could help you today, and there's probably a few players in this draft who undoubtedly could help you tomorrow and could even be perceived as the best of the long term plan for this organization. So as a coach, how do you process that in terms of working things out with Terry? And is it tough for you as a coach knowing maybe we**

**should take this player better for tomorrow, or does part of you want this better player today?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, there's a couple things. I mean, you're always looking short term/long term is what you're essentially saying.

**Q. Yes.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Our expectation is to win, so how do you do that short term, and how do you do that long term? That's any player you bring in here, regardless of position. I know it's easy what's driving -- whether you're talking about the quarterback position, which I assume you're alluding to, or you're talking about other position players, we're looking at all of those. Anybody we want to bring in here, we want them to help us long term. That's the investment you're making when you're picking, especially early in the Draft. So that's always a consideration.

What's a player short term? What's a player long term? Things can change. There's a lot of variables that go into it. So we're always discussing that.

**Q. Do you struggle with that at all or not?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I don't think I struggle. It's just part of the job. You'd better have a vision for now, and you clearly need to plan for later because there will be a lot of unintended consequences if you're only looking short-sighted.

**Q. Terry, my first question is for you. How much of a role has Kyle Smith, Dwaune Jones, and Anthony Robinson played in helping you get the draft board site and helping you through that process?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Great question. Kyle Smith has actually run the meetings. He's come in and hit the ground running, and he's actually run the meetings, and he's been exceptional. I was just -- he usually calls me. He calls me all night, and I haven't slept the last couple days, and I figured out the reason why. It's because Kyle usually calls me at 11:00, and he gets my mind racing because he's so excited and passionate about so much, and he's got that natural energy.

But he runs the meetings, and Dwaune and A. Rob have been obviously excellent going through the process and their leadership in this department has been excellent. And the entire college scouting staff. It's been -- going through those meetings has been really good. Getting to know some of the guys that I haven't known, but there's a lot of passion, there's a lot of conviction. They're very well prepared, and they do a lot of work. It's been a really good

experience going through that process with that entire staff.

**Q. Arthur, heading into free agency, one of the biggest holes on the roster, in terms of numbers, is that safety. Obviously, you added Harris and Harmon, but do you feel like you're set at the safety position with those two guys, or is that a position that you guys will be looking to add more players to over the next month?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I don't think you ever look at it you're just set at that position. It certainly helps that the pieces we've added to the roster going into the draft where you maybe don't feel as desperate to reach in certain areas, we're excited about Erik and Duron. We're excited to bring those guys into our program. They're quality veterans that can play, that fit our scheme. So it helps.

But I don't think you ever look at it, kind of to what Jeff was saying earlier, we don't ever look at paper, we signed these two guys, we're set. You draft this player, you're set. There's so many things that happen. You're constantly looking at the roster -- injuries happen, things happen that come up during the season, so you're constantly looking to improve. So that will be at any position we add.

**Q. This question is, I guess, first for either Terry or Arthur, in that how -- it's a little off of Jeff's question. How palatable is it with your first ever pick to take a guy that could be sitting for a year, year and a half, two years, if you went, say, the quarterback route? Is that something that's even palatable in your situation right now?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I think, when you're picking at 4, we're trying to take an impact player, whether that's a player that's going to sit or a player that's going to play right away, we want to bring in an impact player that fits the culture, that has the right makeup, and we have a clear vision for that player.

So whether it's someone that's going to sit or whether it's someone that's going to play day one, we have to have a clear vision, and we have to feel really good about not only the player and the skill set, but also the person that we're bringing into this building. That's when you talk about any draft pick really.

**Q. And Terry, the second question would be for you. It's a little bit draft adjacent in that have you made decisions on fifth year options yet, and where does that stand at this point with Calvin and Hayden?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, those are things we discussed, but we need to discuss that with those players and those agents and make sure we have those

communications with them as opposed to doing it in this forum.

**Q. I know the quarterback conversation has been what it's been, but if you don't take one at 4, is there one among that 150 you're talking about, especially at the lack of depth at that position? Could you draft one in a later round, maybe as early as second?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, we have a plan to add quarterbacks. There are some good quarterbacks that are going to go in the first round, and if you look historically, there have been quarterbacks from the first round, the mid-rounds, the late rounds, and there's different ways to acquire quarterbacks, and there's quarterbacks that have been successful and not successful in all those rounds.

So we have to go through the whole process and evaluate every quarterback top to bottom and turn over every stone and make sure we're going through that whole process with those players. So we understand we have to add quarterbacks to the roster, and there's a lot of good ones and a lot of good options.

**Q. Arthur, just your experience in this, do you believe, when you add players, some people are, hey, I want guys who are captains or leaders or who played in a certain program. Are you a believer in that? Or to you, it's more so it fits scheme and culture when you're looking at some of these prospects?**

ARTHUR SMITH: More so fits the scheme and culture. I think any player we bring in here, regardless of position, they've got to fit. When you look at the history of the draft, there's a lot of excitement. We've got to get it right. We've got to get the right players in here that can be successful. It doesn't mean somebody we may not like can't go some rounds and be successful. We just don't feel they're a fit for us. That's pretty common throughout the league, and that's part of the process.

I mean, you go back and look year over year, a lot of attention is on the first round, but the heart of your roster is going to be these mid-round picks, and they need to fit, and we need to have a clear vision for them. It's been exciting, and we're excited about that, but the culture and fit is really, really important to us.

**Q. This question is for the both of you all. What does your ideal player look like, and how have you gone about weeding out guys that doesn't necessarily fit into what you want in a player?**

TERRY FONTENOT: The ideal player -- look, we have spent time with, again, Dean and Dave and Marquice and

really all the coaches, and they've gone through the profile of exactly what the prototype is for each specific position, and we've discussed that. Then what we have to do, as we go through all the players aren't going to fit in this perfect box. So we have to know what the non-negotiables are, and we have to know what you have to have at this position.

And we're finding traits. As you get to later in the Draft, sometimes you're finding developmental players with traits, and they're not all going to be perfect. But there's been a lot of communication with that, with the coaches at the specific positions, and like Arthur alluded to, it's about the makeup. It's not just about the skill set. It's about bringing in the right types of players because, when you have the right makeup and you're smart, tough, and competitive, and you're compassionate and you love ball and you love to work and you love to train, we know we have the people in this building from all the resource ins this building to get players to reach those ceilings.

So it's about us finding a trait that we like and finding the right makeups, and we know we'll get those players to get the most of their ability.

ARTHUR SMITH: We're not just fixed. You have ideal sizes you're looking for, but as you guys know, with players it's not one size fits all. If there's somebody that can add value to this team in any phase, we're going to look at them and bring them in. I don't just subscribe to that notion, because a guy went to a certain school or he's got to be this height, like we're looking for good football players anywhere, no matter how tall they are, what size they are, what school they went to.

**Q. Also, a followup to you, Arthur. Being that the success you have with Derrick Henry as a running back, does anything transfer into your line of thinking go I've got to get this guy that I can give the ball to about 30 times a game?**

ARTHUR SMITH: No, because I don't think there's any comparisons. I've gone on the record a few times. It's not fair to any running back we bring in here if you're going to compare him to someone like Derrick. We need that person to be who he is. I think you've got to be objective about it. Okay, why did that work here? It doesn't necessarily mean you've got to hit copy, paste, print, here's the game plan, ready to roll. That's not how it works.

I just don't believe in comparisons. We're going to look for guys who have unique skill sets who can help us move the football and score touchdowns in skill positions regardless of position -- receiver, tight end, running back, fullback. I just don't get into those comparisons because it's not fair.

We had a lot of success there because of Derrick, and that's a credit to him and those guys there, but it doesn't mean we've got to pick somebody and think, oh, he's got to be exactly like player A or B.

**Q. Terry, you mentioned that you still have work to do to be able to sign your draft class. What role does that cold reality play in any talks that you may have about trading down for additional picks?**

TERRY FONTENOT: It doesn't really affect the draft in that sense. We'll still go through the draft and go through it and do what we think is best in each particular round, and we'll sign an undrafted free agent class, and we'll go through the whole process. I wouldn't say it affects the draft in that sense. The only thing it affects is being able to sign, say, free agents or make trades. We have to consider it, if there's some opportunities to trade for players, but if their cap number isn't right, then that's where it plays in part with the draft, but it won't affect the actual draft.

We have a plan, and we'll figure out a way to get it done. It's a challenge, but we're embracing it, and we're excited about it, and we'll make it work.

**Q. For Arthur, has the decision on the off-season program, not being able to see your guys on the field right now, affect any assessments you may be wanting to make this time of year on your current players for these decisions in the Draft?**

ARTHUR SMITH: No. I mean, there's a lot of noise made about it, and we know what the off-season program really hasn't changed since the CBA of 2011. Now you add the virtual, and we all adapt to the virtual learning last year. There's always going to be some sort of virtual. Right now we're still working through a pandemic. So you know there's going to be virtual settings. That's what the reality is, and we've got to make the most of it, but it doesn't affect any decisions being made.

Again, you've got to be objective about the spring. It's a voluntary process that guys want to come here and work, and when they allow us to go out on the field and coach them at some point, you've got to coach the guys that are here. You don't want to go out regardless and say it's a non-pandemic year and go out in spring. We're not looking for the king of spring. We're looking for guys who are going to be here and be good football players in late July, August, and help us win in the fall.

**Q. This is for Mr. Fontenot. Wins and losses go by the coach's name, rightly or wrongly. How a GM is rated goes on how he does in the Draft. I know you've been**

**around drafts for many, many years, but this is kind of the first one you've had where you get to make the call.**

**Do you feel nervous? Do you feel excited? Do you feel exhilarated? All of the above? None of the above?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, I appreciate the question. I would start off with there's definitely no pressure because I believe the pressure is in the process and the preparation, and that's where you put the pressure. Someone told me -- I don't know if I think it was like a month ago -- that pressure is a privilege. That's where, when you think about your players in two-minute situations and in the fourth quarter, at the end of games, in the red zone, like you want those players that want the ball. You want the coaches that want to make those calls, like people that embrace the pressure moments.

Also, I would say there's not any pressure on one person because it really is our process. It really is. It's myself and Arthur. Even the narrative that wins and losses go on coaches and players go on the GM, we really don't see it like that. That's not how we operate. It's our process. Everything we do, we discuss it, and we're doing it together. So every win and loss is on both of us. Every player that doesn't work out is on both of us.

This is our process. When I say us, I'm talking about the man sitting up here, and the men that have been grinding -- the coaches, the scouts, everyone in this building -- that it's all about the team. There really aren't any egos. It's our process. It's about us. There's no pressure on one person because we're doing this together.

**Q. There's one word I didn't use back a minute ago, and that word is fun. Is this fun?**

TERRY FONTENOT: It really is fun.

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah.

TERRY FONTENOT: Because this is what we all love to do. This is what we love -- we all have passion in what we do, and we love to do it. Whether we're in here late at night watching players or discussing, like there's a lot of men in this building, men and women in this building that are really passionate about this, and we're really excited about it. It's fun.

**Q. Terry, I always find it mind boggling when you hear a player say, I was surprised to go to team A because team A never even interviewed me, went through the process. In your experience selecting players, have you always drafted somebody that you had interaction with, whether it was obviously back in the day in**

**person or in Zoom?**

TERRY FONTENOT: We've had interaction with a lot of players, multiple interactions, and we really take advantage of even being at pro days and being -- because not being able to work players out or not being able to be in the buildings during the year, we've really had to take advantage of every exposure that we could with the players. So I would say we spent a lot of time with these players, and that's what you want to do because you want to take advantage of every exposure and every opportunity, not just with us, it can be with other coaches or player engagement.

You want everybody to touch the players, and there's going to be a lot of different opinions, but we want to take advantage of as many exposures as possible with these players.

**Q. Can you evaluate the pass rush group? How is scouting the HBCUs? And I didn't really understand the Julio roar the last couple days. It sounds like you just said you were answering your phone. Can you expound on the Julio situation and those other areas for us?**

TERRY FONTENOT: You know what would be a lot easier is, if you just kind of came in the building and started working for the team. You can be in our draft meetings, and you can be a part of everything. We're meeting about the cap, and you can sit in on those meetings, and you wouldn't have to ask all these questions.

**Q. That's the beat writer's job is to ask a whole lot of questions.**

TERRY FONTENOT: There's some talented pass rushers in this draft, and there's some different flavors and some raw players. Sometimes at that position you want to add pressure players. Sometimes you have players who might not have the production or might not have reached the ceiling at this point, but when you're looking at pressure players, you have to value that because, if you can find the right pressure player, you have to take advantage of it. I would say there's some good ones in this class.

Obviously, HBCU, we evaluate every prospect, every player. We're in every school. Again, that's where our scouts do an excellent job. They make sure they're going to turn over every stone, and we have connections and resources everywhere. We're going to dig into every player. There's not going to be a prospect that we don't know everything about.

And the last question was Julio?

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**Q. Yes.**

TERRY FONTENOT: I really don't want to make this about Julio because we hold that player in high regard, just like you guys do, just like everyone outside this building does. So we hold him in high regard. The answer to that is just pointing to the cap and pointing to the fact that, we'll answer calls on any players. When teams ask about players, we have to answer those calls, and we have to listen because we do have to continue to -- we knew, when we stepped into this, we were going to have to make some tough decisions because it's just the reality of it. That's where we are with the salary cap. So we have to make some difficult decisions, so we have to look at all the different options and all the different scenarios.

So if someone calls about any player, we have to discuss it and do what's right for the team. That's what we're always going to do. But we hold that player in high regard. It's just we have to look at every option to get where we need to get.

**Q. Specifically on a player, Kyle Pitts, everybody I've spoken to says he's going to be great. There's no dispute about that, even this being the NFL Draft and nobody foes for sure. However, almost everybody and many think, wow, that's really high to take a tight end. Do either of you have any reservations about taking a specific position so early because of that?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Kyle Pitts, he is a special player. I would say -- there's a lot of players in the Draft like this, but he's also a special young man too, if you look at his makeup, even being only 20 years old. So he is a very talented player, and we look at it like we have to evaluate all these players, and we'll say what they are and have a vision for what they are, and we'll determine when the right time is, and we'll compare them to some other players.

But there are a lot of good players sitting right there at that spot. We're going to be looking at a lot of talented players, and we just have to weigh it. I wouldn't say you can or can't take a specific position at a certain point. I would just say we have to evaluate the man and evaluate the skill sets and determine what's right for us.

**Q. I have a couple follow-ups. Terry, I know you don't want to make this about Julio, but it's obviously a fairly large deal. What would you need to hear to say, okay, I'm going to actually make this move? What would you need to really hear or see to say I feel comfortable doing this?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, I don't want to put a number

on it or put a specific. It's just, again, it really is just a weighing process. Again, I really don't want to make it about him, but I understand. He has an expensive contract, and any team can look at our cap situation and understand that we're going to have to make some decisions but don't want to make it about that player and what we would take for him or not because, again, hold him in high regard.

It's just we'd accept calls on any player, and we just have to weigh it and do what's best for the organization.

**Q. Just to kind of follow on that, you all restructured a whole bunch of players. Like you were saying, players took some pay cuts. You didn't do that with Julio. Why did you decide to do that with Julio and not do it with other players?**

TERRY FONTENOT: You really don't want to because it's not a good -- when we restructure contracts and you're having more dead money down the road, those aren't decisions we want to make. We have to make some of those decisions this year, but we want to have some balance with that because we want to -- this isn't going to be an overnight fix. With the cap, it's going to take time. We want to have a healthy cap at some point, so we can't just restructure every contract because it's hurting us in future years.

We look at each situation, and we determine how we're going to move forward, but we have to have some balance in that regard.

**Q. One more quick. I just want to maybe drill down on that a little bit more. Why then did you not restructure -- why make the decision to not restructure Julio when you did restructure Nat and Jake and some of the other guys? What made not doing that on Julio what you wanted to do?**

TERRY FONTENOT: I got it. I know we keep talking about Julio, but I don't want to make this about one player and drill down into one player. It's just, when we look at the scope of things and we look at the circumstance we're in, we make some decisions. There's a lot of variables in it, and there's a lot of really smart people -- I promise you, there's a lot of really smart people that we discussed it with and determined what to do. It's not over. We're still going through this process.

But we want to have balance, and we want to do things the right way. It's all fluid, and it's all in process right now.

**Q. Just to be clear, I really want to be clear on this, are you guys waiting until the 49ers make their pick at No.**



**3 before we know anything about y'all's plans? In the next 24 hours, we're not going to wake up tomorrow morning, and it's like, oh, the Falcons made a decision. It's really going to be about what the 49ers are doing at No. 3?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Are you asking if we're going to announce the pick before the first pick?

**Q. I just want to know if you can break it down some more.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Impossible.

**Q. I want to know if I'm going to wake up in the morning and have a lot of stuff to do about trading down or anything. I just want to make sure we're clear, the Falcons, we won't know what they're doing until they're on the clock.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Otherwise, it's all rumor. That's what drives this time of year. People make up things, and they throw things out there and see what sticks just to fill air time. Look, we have contingency plan after contingency plan at No. 4. If we're picking at 1, sure. You could be dead set on who you're going to take, but as you guys have all seen, things happen on draft night, and we've got to be prepared for anything.

Again, like you said, Terry mentioned, when you're on the clock, who knows what offer you're going to get? You've got to weigh everything. I promise you -- and I don't want to speak for Terry, but it won't be coming from either one of us, and it's not true. People can make up what they want to make up now.

**Q. One more for you, Arthur. There are so many talking heads talking about how this really isn't a defensive draft class, but as you've talked to Dean Pees, does he see in this class what he's looking for in terms of changing the scheme around, getting some guys in to fill in some holes?**

ARTHUR SMITH: We feel like there's really good players all over this draft at multiple positions. I think the easy thing to focus on is at the top of the draft. Everyone gets excited, and they put these narratives out there. This is a really great whatever year. There's going to be really good players taken. When I look back in this draft third, fourth, fifth round.

Whether that's the D-linemen or somebody -- some D-linemen is going to emerge in this draft, and we hope we get the right one if we take this position for the Falcons.

You go back in history year after year, people get excited about the first round, round 10, and people look, oh, why don't you take this guy 38th? We had the 35th pick. That's a valuable pick. All these picks are valuable. There's good players in here, and we've got to make nine picks at least. Who knows how it shakes out. We feel good about adding good football players in this draft.

**Q. I just have one more quick one for Arthur. How has it been working with Matt in the first couple weeks that you've been able to meet together virtually?**

ARTHUR SMITH: It's been good. We've had really good virtual meetings, not just with Matt, but with the entire team. It's been fun getting to know these guys and them getting to know us as a coaching staff and trying to develop these relationships, earn the trust both ways. Matt's been great, and all the guys have been participating in the virtual setting. We're in year one, and it's good to get to know each other through that setting.

**Q. Arthur mentioned earlier about filling out the roster in the mid to late rounds, but how important is it to you to hit on those players and find value in those mid to late rounds?**

TERRY FONTENOT: Yeah, good question. It's really about having clear visions because it's easy to say this is a developmental player, but Arthur needs to -- when he sets his inactives and sets -- if you're here, you have to be contributing to this team in some way. So if you're developmental, say, defensive back or linebacker, you have to have special teams value. You have to do something in the kicking game for Marquice and Hoff.

So we have to have clear visions for every player we bring in this building of how they're going to be successful so we can go through that process of getting them everything they need to be successful.

So, yeah it's important. The players we bring in, whether it's mid rounds, late rounds, undrafted free agencies, we want to have clear visions for how they're going to help this football team, not just throughout the week, but on Sundays.

**Q. Coach, being a former offensive lineman, what has been your assessment of the guys up front?**

ARTHUR SMITH: We've just been in the virtual meetings. These guys have been great. We feel like we've got good young players who are here and have been on our roster and can help us now. Obviously, as you mentioned, we're going to go as the line goes, and so we're excited to work with those, and we'll see what other pieces we can add



throughout the weekend and throughout this off-season. They've been great.

**Q. For Coach, Arthur, you talk about the opt-outs earlier. How do you do it in a floating schedule? You would have got two mini camps, rookie mini camp, and extra time in the good old days. Now, I guess, just the camp and some video stuff. How are you going to float that schedule, get everybody ready and so forth?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, the league sets out the parameters. We're in -- it's voluntary anyway.

**Q. It used to be mandatory.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Once they changed the CBA in 2011, the off-season schedules are pretty standard issue with the nine weeks. So that's what the parameters are, and we're going to work with the rules that the other 31 teams are working with. Guys that are here that come into the virtual meetings, we're going to coach them, and then whenever they decide, whatever phases we go to and players that get on the field, we'll work with the guys who show up. It's voluntary, and everybody's different.

If we have vets that know how to get themselves ready to play -- I don't feel like anything's going to change in terms of they'll be evaluated who's going to help us in the '21 season. That's going to be decided at camp. Under the old rules, new rules, not going to be decided in May.

**Q. All our final mock drafts are due at 11:00. All the first three picks are locked in. Who should we pencil in at 4?**

TERRY FONTENOT: That's good. Jeff has such a unique way. Jeff asked the same question like eight different ways. Look, I'd love to look at your mock drafts. I think that would be fun.

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