

Tennessee Titans Media Conference

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Jon Robinson

Mike Vrabel

Draft Press Conference



JON ROBINSON:

Q. A lot of people thought you guys might hit in the first couple of rounds, was that a consideration given the losses or were people selected just before?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, there were certainly players in those position groups that we liked. We tried to move around some tonight. We were able to slide back. We tried moving up and couldn't get up quite high enough a couple times, and that's just kind of the way the players fell at the end. But there are some players still left. We've got six picks tomorrow, and there are still some players on the board that we like.

Q. As kind of a follow-up to that, you said there are players at the receiver and tight end spot that you like. Are some of those capable of being able to come in and be significant contributors at those positions and be guys who can be starter, even day three draftees?

JON ROBINSON: I think, yeah, we've said it all along, once we add them to the team, we have a certain evaluation on the player and what we think the skill set is going to be. Ultimately it will be up to the player to come in and work hard, buy into our program and what play time they get they will earn. I think that we have proven that with players that we historically have selected in the third day, guys that have come in here, Brown was a fifth round pick that worked and earned playing time as a starter for us. We tell these guys, it doesn't matter where you're selected, what matters is you come in here and you're committed to improving and you're committed to being coached and we feel like certainly these guys that we've picked the last two nights are about that. Hopefully looking to add six more tomorrow.

Q. What are you adding with Rice to your linebacker core and why is it important to create competition with any group, not necessarily linebacker?

MIKE VRABEL: Competition is something we would love to build our competition around. It's about competition and winning. And so when you try to put a roster together and Jon and I communicate about it daily, is just try to put pieces together, people that are going to want to reflect us on and off the field that are willing to put the team first, obviously love football, those things and just really enjoyed our conversations. This is a player that as we watched other players, and watch a lot of SEC football when you get ready for the Draft. He kept showing up, kept making plays and the more we talked with him, got to know him, this is a confident player who was willing to lead inside and was productive.

Q. You mentioned trying to move around a little bit. When you do make the decision to move back when you did with the one pick, was that after missing out on some guys at that spot?

JON ROBINSON: No, there were a couple guys that we were still considering there. But you know, that pick in the fourth round to slide back a few spots, we felt was a good value to us, adding another player early on in the process tomorrow.

There were still players there that we would have considered at that pick but just felt like the value to slide back and pick up that fourth was really good for us.

Q. In talking to Elijah early in the process, he said he really liked the meetings with you guys and he just said that on the Zoom just now. What was it about the connection? Why did he seem like such a guy that matched what you guys want to do?

MIKE VRABEL: I think he's been raised well. Obviously his upbringing and his career in Washington, what he learned there, that was a lot of things. That was early on. That was one we checked off pretty quickly and said we're all set with this guy.

We asked him about school and he gave such a genuine answer. He said, "I don't really love school but I love to learn." That really, I think, sunk in. He was just intelligent. Talked ball. He knew about our football team. He had prepared for the interview by watching our football team. He spoke highly of how we played and the effort and finish



which we play with. You know, this was an exciting pick for Jon and I and everybody involved with our organization, our coaches and Miss Amy. This is going to be a fun guy to coach.

Q. You said on Monday that you liked the depth at pass rusher and you feel like there's guys situationally that could come in and help. Did that kind of go into overlooking some of the players that you had options to get and now you're in a situation where you will probably have to pick one later?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we'll see how it comes off tomorrow. There's still some depth there at that position spot for us. We'll see who of those guys are available tomorrow. We were in between picks on a couple of those guys there that came off and certainly we would have considered if we were on the clock and that's just kind of the way it goes with the draft. We try to position ourselves to get a couple guys and it just never really manifested itself. There's still pretty good depth at that position in the later rounds.

Q. What kind of an advantage does Molden have with growing up with a father who played in this league?

MIKE VRABEL: I don't know that. I mean, again, I think that would be -- I'm sure you've asked him. You'd have to ask Tyler. You'd have to ask my son. I don't know. I think there's a lot of opportunities that I think children have that parents, fathers are professional athletes, just being around teams, being around the locker room, understanding how powerful that thing can be and the bond that's created between athletes from all over that come together to form a team, and that's probably something that I would have said. You know, my dad wasn't an athlete; he was a coach when I was growing up, so I don't know.

Q. Have you talked to Atlanta about Julio Jones?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, I'm not going to comment about any talks that we might have had with other teams regarding players.

Q. You've spent three picks in the last six years at right tackle, two firsts and a second now. Isn't that an awful lot at one spot?

JON ROBINSON: I think tackle is a premium position in the National Football League. I think that's a position that resources are allocated towards, and you know, we are going to keep looking and keep trying to add football players at that position that we think can come in and contribute to the team and help us win.

Q. When you're thinking about scheming cornerbacks and putting the right guys on the field, do you think about it in terms of this guy might be more of a slot corner, this guy is more outside, base, or is it just simply get the best three on the field in a nickel situation?

MIKE VRABEL: You know, I appreciate that. I don't think right now we're in a scheme mode. I think that we do do that I think in our evaluations. Sometimes it's nickel only, it's inside, outside, it's outside and can potentially play inside. Those are conversations we have. I think as we get closer to the season and we start to say, okay, maybe there's a bigger slot or there's a quicker slot that maybe you would match up differently there.

We would like them to know all the positions. You know, obviously the no outside and we do get into substituted defenses, having a few guys that can play inside, sometimes we play nickel versus 12 personnel and that may be a bigger nickel or that could even be a safety. We talked about Hooker that's learned more than one position.

Right now, I don't know about the scheme factor, but certainly I think that that comes in play with some of our evaluations that we look at as where we would probably look at this player at, whether it's, you know, nickel or inside outside or outside inside?

Q. With Rice, you talked about the other two players with this. What did he do or say pass the loves football test?

MIKE VRABEL: I don't think there's anything that you say. I would rather go by the old adage of show me and don't tell me because I see better than I hear.

He does play with a demeanor that we think kind of really enjoy watching him, and again, we've been through this. Jon and I sit in there with these scouts that do a fantastic job, and kept showing up, kept tackling the ball, kept flying around. And I think that this was a player that really grew on us, and me personally I think as a coach in our conversations with him and watching him on film. I think that's always a good sign. When you're putting on a tape or you notice another player that you weren't intending to watch, that's usually a pretty good sign.

Q. What's a realistic role for Rice as a rookie and how similar is he to Rashaan and what's the confidence in Rashaan?

JON ROBINSON: We have good confidence in Rashaan. Monty, he'll come in and compete at the inside linebacker

position on special teams. To what degree he picks up the defense and understands that and learns that and earns play time, that will be determined by him and his work ethic and based on the information that we were -- that I got from Georgia. Consummate worker, loves football, works hard, leader, vocal. All those things were very positive in his favor.

MIKE VRABEL: I guess I would just first address Rashaan. Extremely confident and comfortable with Rashaan. He comes in and tries to make a daily impact on our football team in virtual meetings. He's learning. We're doing some things that continue to change that position and I think he's excited about that. And then with Monty, it was looking at a player, trying to get younger and help us on special teams and what his expectation level is is the same for everybody. You know, come in and know what to do as quickly as possible, and play as hard and as fast as you can and try to help the team in any possible way.

Q. Wonder how difficult it is to evaluate a guy who plays at an FCS level like Radunz and how important was he did at Senior Bowl and seeing him play against higher level competition?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, that's a good question. Their season was shortened obviously. That Senior Bowl exposure was really good for him to go against some of the best of the best in college football. Got a chance to spend some time down there with him. Get to know him. He's about what we're about, you know, football-wise and makeup and commitment to being a good football player.

Yeah, that Senior Bowl experience and week down there for him both in the practices and in the game was very positive in his favor.

MIKE VRABEL: I wouldn't have too much to add to that. I agree with everything Jon said. I don't want to sit there and repeat it. Some of these players have played at a smaller school and when given the opportunity to go to the Senior Bowl and they take advantage of it, you take notice and you go back. That's what the Senior Bowl does, and then you go back and study what tape is available and watch their workout and try to project and have a vision for them.

Q. Four of your five top cornerbacks now new, and Christian didn't play a heck of a lot last season; he's only in his second year. How much of a challenge for those guys to rebuild that cohesion and clubhouse mentality that your secondary thrived on when it was at its best?

MIKE VRABEL: Well, I don't think that -- you don't play

well and don't win games in this league because of tee shirts and slogans. You win games in this league by coming together as a team and as a unit and a position group and going out there and pushing each other and trying to work, and every year is new. Every year there's going to be change. There's going to be different things that are going to be asked of him from a playbook perspective and sometimes from a role.

I think that they got off to a great start. I think all of these meetings have been fantastic. I think they have been better than what I remember it being last year with the virtual sessions. Some players are coming in and when we have an opportunity to have in-person meetings, we will. So we'll just keep coaching them, and I think these guys are still continue to go build a bond and I know they will do that as we work closer towards the season.

Q. When you bring in a guy like Molden who has versatility and can play safety or nickelback and things like that, do you just try to figure out where he best fits in or do you try to think of creative ways to use a guy with that type of versatility?

MIKE VRABEL: I think you have to give the young players a position to focus on and then as they expand and they are showing an ability to understand and comprehend what that job is, then you can give them another job. I'm sure that Elijah will be excited about doing that, but I think you've got to give them a place to start and we'll consider what we feel like is best for him and what's best for the football team.

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