

Tennessee Titans Media Conference

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Jon Robinson
Mike Vrabel

Draft Press Conference



Q. Jon, this defense is going to look so much different from last year. Why was it so important to make changes in this unit?

JON ROBINSON: I think any time you go into free agency in the Draft and there's roster turnover every year and we added players in free agency there after the season was over, we added some guys this weekend via the draft, and we're excited to work with all these guys whenever we can get back and get rolling.

Q. For both of you, how critical are the interactions that you had with the guys that you ended up picking at the Senior Bowl? It seemed like there was a pretty good run, I think, six players that you ended up selecting participated in the Senior Bowl this year.

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, that's a great question, Buck. I think those guys, that was the one setting where we could really sit down and talk to those guys. They had plexiglas up and restrictions certainly weren't as loose then as they are now, but they had masked on, and we were able to talk to them face to face and interact with those guys and came away impressed with those guys that we selected this weekend after talking to them down there.

MIKE VRABEL: I think some of the practices are critical that you can go back and watch the one-on-ones, watch the drill work, and watch practice. I think sometimes the game gets a little muddy. There's not a whole lot of time to prepare. It's pretty simple scheme on both sides, but I think the practices are really cool to be able to go back and watch on tape as well.

Q. You move up to go Fitzpatrick. What do you like about him, and how do you see him fitting in as a rookie? Mike, if you can answer that as well.

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we watched a lot on Dez, and we like his size. We like his speed. We like his length. He's

got good route running skills. He's got some things he's got to clean up. I love his toughness. I love his tenacity as a blocker. He's good in traffic, catching the football.

One of the things, as we continue to visit with him and talk to the staff there at Louisville about him was just how tireless his work ethic was. Excited to get him here in Nashville, and it's one of the things we told him on the phone is the staff there raved about your work ethic. Be ready to bring that here to Nashville.

MIKE VRABEL: I would say the expectations are going to be the same for Dez as they are with everybody else that we'll add this week and the players that are currently on our roster is to try to make a daily impact on our football team, but for rookies, it's about coming in. It's about learning what to do. It's about being able to go out on the practice field at some point in time and be in positions to help themselves and to compete and try to earn the respect of their teammates.

Q. On the tight end position, how close were you there on there? Is it disappointing not to get one? How would you assess where you are at that position now?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, Joe, we were close a couple times. We had some discussions yesterday, some today. We like the group that we've got, and we'll continue to evaluate players that are available here after the draft, as we start that process.

I've gotten several calls from general managers on other teams that have players on their roster. So the roster building process is never over, but we're excited with the group that we got back with Firk and with Swaim and Hudson and Adam Pinkney, who was a good player coming out of Vanderbilt and Parker Hesse. We'll see how those guys come in and compete and continue to evaluate the players that are available as we continue to move through the off-season here.

MIKE VRABEL: I don't know what you'd like me to add. Is there something that you didn't get answered there?

Q. I guess let me quick follow up then, since you threw that out.

MIKE VRABEL: I just don't want to be redundant, that's all.



Q. It's probably more of a Jon question, but MyCole Pruitt, is there a possibility that he could be back?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we'll see kind of how it goes here. Like I said, in the post-draft. As we inch closer to mandatory mini camp and the off-season and training camp. Michael's played a lot of good snaps for us. He's done nothing to warrant not being under consideration to come back here.

Q. Wondering if you could evaluate Rashad Weaver. Edge rushers, it seems like a lot of times they forget about playing against the run. This guy seems to get a lot of high marks in playing against the run in addition to going against the quarterback. Wondering if you could talk about that a bit.

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, he's a tough player. He's a team captain. They speak very highly of him. I think he's got good length. I think he's got good strength of the position. So much so, they even kicked him down at the Senior Bowl. You can see him play some down in the guard there. He held his own. He's a high motor player. He's a fun player to watch. I think he's a disruptive player in both the run and the pass game. Excited for him to come in here and compete and work.

MIKE VRABEL: I think just touching on that Senior Bowl experience, so many of these players come down here, and they're looking to showcase their skills, and they ask them to move down inside. Here's a kid that's going to go and try to make a name for himself or get recognized playing a position he's played for four years in college, and they move him inside to play the three technique, and he didn't leave. He didn't pack his stuff up and leave. He went in there, and he tried to do it the way they coached him to do it. He didn't run around blocks. He tried to play blocks how they coached.

I think that's pretty impressive and certainly stood out to me because I was like why don't you try to run around and make some plays? Coach, I'm just trying to do however they're coaching me to do it. I think that says a lot about who he is.

Q. For both of you, Racey McMath seems like a guy that has all the measurables that you could want in a receiver. Probably needs a little more polish, and before he's really ready to go. What's the key, I guess, to unlocking his potential and getting him to be more than a special teams contributor?

JON ROBINSON: I think it will be his daily work ethic, which is good. His preparation, his attention to detail. But

he is -- he's a big, fast receiver. He plays the game with toughness and a physicality component that's easy to see on film, and then his contributions in the kicking game certainly had him pushed up there for us, and we had him really highly rated for what he's been able to do on special teams.

MIKE VRABEL: He plays with a lot of scheme and a lot of violence and is willing to put his body on the line for his football team. We'll continue to develop him and work with him on route craft and details and coverage recognition and all those things that go into improving as a wide receiver.

But just enjoy his demeanor, his play demeanor, and how fast and how physical he plays.

Q. Do you guys feel -- or how much do you feel like you're more dynamic as a team out of what you've got draft-wise here?

JON ROBINSON: I think we're a better football team after this weekend. I said it last night, and I said it this morning to the group. These guys that we selected this weekend, we loved watching those guys play football. We loved watching -- putting the tape on and watching them do a job that we're now going to hire them to do.

I think they're going to add value to the football team in their various roles, and they're about what we're about with their play style and their makeup.

Q. Is Weaver an outside linebacker as opposed to an end? I mean, he's with that group?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, I think he starts with that -- he goes in the position group in the outside linebacker group, but he's a guy, as we alluded to, with what we've been able to evaluate and how he plays, has shown he can maybe play down on the guard or hit up on the tackle. He's got some versatility to play some defensive end potentially.

We'll try him at a couple different spots, but he certainly goes in the outside linebacker room to start.

Q. Mike, could you speak to the dynamic question. Is that something that's important to you?

MIKE VRABEL: Why did you say it so fast? You said it so quickly.

Q. Because I was going to get cut off maybe.

MIKE VRABEL: Okay. I don't think we're looking for a successful football team. We're looking for a team that

complements each other, that's competitive at every position. That's what we try to do. Those are the conversation that's Jon and I have. We want a team that's about winning and pushing each other.

So whether that's dynamic or not, I don't know. I know they're some guys we really enjoyed watching play football. Whether they had speed or size, they did something really, really well at their position. That's all I want to allude to.

Q. Mike, you all lost a lot of defensive starters from last year in free agency and obviously have a big crop coming in both from this weekend and what you did in free agency. What's the key as a coaching staff when you have a lot of turnover and a lot of new faces to get everybody on the same page and ready to go quickly in a new system?

MIKE VRABEL: And I would add to that, Luke, in a virtual setting, to start the program. I think that that's challenging, and I have to weigh my time in a team meeting. Obviously, we have special teams meetings, but how much time do I give the coaches as a defensive unit, an offensive unit, and then also positionally? We only get so much time with them right now virtually. So that's been something that I've had to probably sacrifice a little bit of now is my time with them as a team, and to be able to transfer that time to positional and unit meetings.

So I think you start there. We've been breaking these guys up into groups, so you'd have maybe two or three D-linemen, a couple linebackers, and then a couple defensive backs. They kind of go, and they work on what we would call virtual classroom, and they work through the screens, obviously, with the coaches that are giving them calls, looking at formations, and that's something that we're trying to do. We're just trying to recreate what they would do in a walk-through or something out on the field.

So they're hearing each other talk. They're hearing voices. And that's the first step. The next step would be in person meetings and walk-throughs when we can do those in phase two or ultimately phase three and the OTAs and training camp.

But you have to go out there and put the time in. You have to hear each other's voice. You have to play off the guy in front of you. You have to work with the guy next to you, and that takes practice.

Q. Jon, most of your picks on the first two days were defensive, and then you of course added a couple of more today. Do you feel like you've got a nice blend of players who can both start and then also contribute as

role players?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, Luke, I think that's what we try to do is put all of that together. The players that are on our roster after the season's over, the ones that we add in free agency, and then how we attack the draft. You're trying to blend all that together with various roles on the defensive side of the football, various spots in their careers.

But I feel like we've got a good mix of all of that on the defensive side.

Q. Jon, given what you have with Derrick Henry, how much was size and ability and willingness to block a consideration when looking at wide receivers from this group?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, that's a great question. I think both the guys that we added today, they're not afraid to go stick their face in there and dig out a safety or go stalk a corner and try to drive them out of bounds. That toughness component.

We talked to all these receivers, and there were some that we really liked, and we weren't able to take them, that's huge for our football team. That's part of our identity is to go in there and block for whoever we hand the ball to, much like when we asked the running backs to block in pass protection. When they're trying to get open and catch a football.

So they've got to do their job in the run game, and the running backs do their job in the pass game so they can get open and catch.

Q. Jon, potentially, you talk about the roster not being done. With the cap situation, what it is, could we perhaps see some restructuring? Obviously, Tannehill out there, but could that open up some more room for you guys to work with, maybe to fill tight end or other needs?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, I think that's something that we're working through is taking stock of the draft and the picks and how those resources are going to allocate into the cap figure. Seeing which players, it might be viable to do that, to give us a little bit of room.

I've said this before at the start of free agency, you have to kind of have your emergency roster needs set aside. You've got to kind of put that in a savings account, for lack of a better term, so you can fill positions as injuries happen, knock on wood, that we don't have that many.

But, yeah, that's something that we're certainly working

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

through is contracts of players to restructure, to maybe give us a little bit more room there.

Q. And if I could, Mike, Jayon had six sacks in 2018. Having him back, the addition of Rice at that inside linebacker position and Weaver, can you move guys around maybe to have more depth or to find more sacks this year, maybe from guys that aren't traditional sacking positions?

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, I mean, I think -- I think that we have some secondary sacks. I think, if you look back -- again, it doesn't mean anything from one year to the next, but we had a bunch of secondary sacks from corner, nickel, safety.

We have to affect the quarterback, whether that's bringing four. You know, you start there, and if you can bring four and cover, then great. And then if not, you've got to keep adding pieces into the rush. Jayon has certainly proven to be somebody that has versatility. I think he's gotten better every year, and his ball production has come up with some huge turnovers for us. He's got his hand on a lot of footballs, tipped and other people have caught them or he's caught them or has punched the ball out.

The other guys that you mentioned as well, those younger players. So we'll start off with those younger guys at a position and see what they do and give them more as they can handle it.

Q. Jon, question for you. With the two final picks, obviously, we mentioned McMath there, but going with some guys that can bring a lot in terms of special teams, with Brady Breeze, what did you see out of him, out of Oregon? And then were you familiar with the fact that he knew Molden and they're like really good childhood friends, I believe.

JON ROBINSON: I think they certainly play stylistically similarly. They throw themselves around. He was a fun guy to watch on defense. He's a fun guy to watch in the kicking game. He's one of the first ones down on the kicking units. He's instinctive. He finds the football on special teams, much like he does on defense. And he's a good tackler.

He was a highly rated special teams guy for us in our stacks, and we were stoked to add them there late in the sixth.

Q. This kind of follows up my question. You've got picks who played a combined one game since 2019 because of opt-outs or COVID. I'm wondering why after such a weird year, that's just not an issue? And

also, how does that change the trajectory of their development?

JON ROBINSON: I think the development will be depending upon them. They're going to get coached. They're going to get pushed. They're going to work hard, and how quickly they improve will ultimately be on them. That's one of the things that we had to work through this season was with the opt-out guys.

You can't just take every guy that played this year. When you start to look at the skill sets of players and how they stack up certainly vertically within their position group and certainly horizontally with other positions, you have to go with the film you have and get to know them on the Zoom calls and make those decisions.

Q. This one is for Coach Vrabel. Looking at your receiver group, I don't know there's a specifically defined slot receiver. How do you feel about that group? Is that something that you would like to address in undrafted free agency?

MIKE VRABEL: We feel we have slots there. I don't know if guys in the receiving group or the same. We've got guys that played in the slot with us. We'll keep working guys around and give them opportunities.

Q. Following up on Turon's question, with the guys you got today in the later rounds at wide receiver and Josh Reynolds, do you guys feel you're pretty well set at the wide receiver position in terms of what departed there, or is there still a need to supplement given the departure of some of those guys?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, like I said earlier, we'll continue to evaluate players that are available, players that are on the street that don't have jobs, or players that do have jobs on other teams that may become available. That's part of my job. That's part of our job is to constantly evaluate the pool of players, the supply of players that you can add to your football team. And then make the decisions that's best for the team.

Q. Decisions on Rashaan Evans and his fifth year option?

JON ROBINSON: Still working through that. I think we've got until Monday to come up with some finality there.

Q. Jon, I know you don't often --

JON ROBINSON: Like clock work.

Q. Is Stephen Gostkowski return a possibility? What



direction are you planning on going?

JON ROBINSON: Right now we've got Tucker McCann on the team. Much like a lot of these questions, we continue to look at the players that are out there and have discussions and kind of see where they're at. Similar to the MyCole Pruitt conversation, at the end of the day, make the best decision for the football team and the player.

Q. I guess for both of you, but Jon, you brought up wanting to make this draft process maybe a little more inclusive under the circumstances of everything being virtual. How do you guys feel you went about accomplishing that? Is it just as simple as having more people on the Zoom calls or in these meetings?

JON ROBINSON: I think that that's probably it, Buck, is just having more people in the Zoom meetings, in the Zoom sessions interacting with the players. If they're not interacting with the player maybe, they're at least listening to whoever is interacting with the player and taking notes and looking for various things throughout the Zoom call to try to get an evaluation on how the player might fit.

MIKE VRABEL: I want to express my, I think, gratitude to Jon and his staff. I know that those scouts, it's tough to be able to have to go out there, trying to get information during the time that we're in. The coaching staff, for the amount of time that they put in, to bring all that information back to Jon and I, for us to digest and go through and watch and stack them and put them all together, it's never going to be perfect because everybody's going to have a different, slightly different opinion, but we got a lot of great information from everybody that was involved.

We'd just like to thank all those people that helped us bring these players in.

Q. Jon, you guys picked a lot of players that had participated in the Senior Bowl. Is that something that weighed in a little more heavily in the decision-making this year, or was that just coincidence? What's behind that?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, I talked a little bit about that earlier. That was certainly a great exposure for these players to go down there and see those guys live interview every single player at the Senior Bowl, have an actual face-to-face conversation with those players. That was a really, really good for us to get the information firsthand down there.

Q. I don't know that anyone wants to ask this question, but it came up earlier in Weaver's interview. Did Weaver earn points or get subtracted points for

getting a sack against BC?

MIKE VRABEL: Listen, we all -- this is a smart player, and I'm going to tell you the conversation I had with Tyler. I said, if you want to play in this league, you're going to need to play against players like this and compare yourself to guys that are going to be in the National Football League.

Rashaan is one of those players, and that's what I told Tyler. Tyler will have his opportunity eventually, but this is about us bringing in guys that we enjoyed watching and that we think are going to make great additions to our football team.

Q. I'll try to ask this a little better. Mike, as you look at the pieces that have now been added on defense, is there a characteristic that you kind of see that jumps out of this group? And how eager are you to get working with them on the field?

MIKE VRABEL: Very eager. We're eager to coach. We're eager to develop and try to teach players. That's what we're in this business for outside of winning championships. So we'll have to find out when that's going to occur. We have a time set for a rookie mini camp, but as far as whatever identity it may be, that has to be built through time in the meetings and on the practice field and in games. That has to be developed.

We're excited, but those are all things that have to be worked on every day.

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