

Tennessee Titans Media Conference

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Jon Robinson
Mike Vrabel

NFL Draft Press Conference

JON ROBINSON: Obviously the decision we made today was a tough one. Really appreciate what AJ has done here for our football team on the field, in the community, and we had discussions back and forth, and really realized we got to a spot where it was going to be hard to kind of get a deal done, and the trade thing kind of manifested itself from them and really started working on that probably in the last 18, 20 hours, and came together pretty quickly this afternoon.

Wish him nothing but the best moving forward, and excited for Treyton and what he can add to our football team, and then the ability to slide back from 26 there, and we get what we felt is really good value over the next couple rounds was good for us.

Q. Did you think about keeping him? He didn't have the power to not be here next year under contract.

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we talked about a lot of things. There were a lot of different scenarios that we went through. These are the decisions that I'm faced with. They're hard decisions and there's a lot of discussion that goes into them, a lot of thought that goes into them. At the end of the day we have to make -- I have to make the hard decisions.

There's a lot of things that impact those decisions. Certainly the finances impact the decisions, and trying to get value when we can. That's the decision we made today.

Q. Mike, how do you set it up to make the team better when you have to trade away one of your best playmakers?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, those are the decisions that we make. We're excited about Treyton. He's been an exciting player in the SEC, big yards per catch, he's a big target. He's fast. He's competitive. He's a player that we spent



time with. He came here on a 30 visit, got to know him, and excited to get him here in the offense and watch him work.

Q. You've done nothing but publicly back AJ throughout the course of this. How did this go down from your standpoint?

MIKE VRABEL: The same exact way it went with Jon. Our offices, we share a wall, so really comfortable with how everything went down. We've been in lockstep throughout this whole process and then we move forward and were able to get picks that we both agreed on at that time. Feel real good about it.

Q. You said before that as long as I'm the head coach here I want to have AJ around on my football team. What changed?

MIKE VRABEL: I think Jon just covered it. I appreciate you reading my words back to me. I know you guys never coached a bunch of grown men that you put a lot of time into it. I love all our players. I love AJ personally. I know how Jon feels about him.

But very comfortable with how this went down and how Jon and I were able to navigate, try to support him and make decisions, and unfortunately we understand that if we're going to be here a while, we're not going to be able to keep every single player that we draft and develop.

This is where we're at, and we're excited to be able to be picking players tomorrow.

Q. Jon, there was a report, I guess, that AJ kind of cut off communications with the organization. Is that accurate, and does that play a part in you realizing that maybe it just wasn't going to work, if that was true?

JON ROBINSON: You know, when dealing on the contract stuff, I dealt with the representatives there, and went back and forth really over the last two to three weeks and just realized that the gap was really too far for us to bridge. In doing that, that's where those hard decisions and those tough discussions come in.

It's not easy, trust me. But at the end of the day that's what Amy has charged me to do is make those tough decisions



and hard decisions, and like I said, wish AJ nothing but the best. Appreciate everything he did here, and excited to -- really excited to work with Treyton.

Q. About the gap being too big to bridge, why was right now during the draft the best time to make that move as opposed to waiting until next off-season or further in this off-season?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, I think it's really the draft capital that's involved. You get return on the trade with the ability to pick players in this draft. That's really kind of what dictated the timing of everything.

Q. What's the message to the next guy who has three years on his first contract and wants more than you're willing to pay?

JON ROBINSON: Keep working hard. Again, every decision is different. There's a lot of thought that goes into that, and every situation is really unique.

Q. You guys have been really content for rookies to be slow participants and slow contributors. Do you have a different expectation for Treyton Burks considering you just traded away your No. 1 wide receiver?

JON ROBINSON: I don't think we're really content with anything. We want guys to come in here and work hard and learn what to do and be good teammates, and earn the right to go out there and play. We've seen some guys where it takes longer for that to happen, and some guys catch on pretty quick.

Q. Do you see similarities in Treyton's game with AJ, their physical parallels there even though they're different players?

JON ROBINSON: Each individual player is different. They have kind of their own unique way of how they play the game. The more we spent time with Treyton and watched the film and dug into it, we felt like that he did a lot of things physically that we like and for that position.

Q. You've talked to us before about how the locker room is the players' space and you don't like to get too involved in how they manage things. Does this impact how you have to talk to guys about things or how you'll approach it?

MIKE VRABEL: About what?

Q. Just about the trade situation and the message it sends?

MIKE VRABEL: What message does it send?

Q. Just that this is a super talented player and understanding the situation that you guys have just laid out and that may send a message or may be received by players in ways that you can't necessarily anticipate.

MIKE VRABEL: Well, there's a lot of things that we can't anticipate. I just feel confident that we went to the extreme to try to keep AJ here. I mean, I was involved with the process through the entire time.

We're going to continue to coach our guys, develop them, try to make it about the team, and this is just another example of making tough decisions that hopefully in the long run it's going to make our team better. I know that it probably doesn't get received by that publicly, but this was a difficult process to get through, and I know what the gap that we had to bridge was. This wasn't easy.

Q. As someone who's a coach but put in a position to succeed in each week, I know Treyton is not going to be your, quote-unquote, replacement for AJ, but how does his availability when you guys made the trade, what he can bring you guys, maybe ease and make you more comfortable with what happened?

MIKE VRABEL: We've liked him since when AJ was on our roster. He was a player that we were targeting just because of the skill set that we mentioned. The big, the physical, did a great job coming in here, knew that -- there were some things he probably had to overcome for that first introduction in Indianapolis. He was very self-aware and had a great visit with everybody, the installation, the visit with Jon and I and everybody else.

He was a player that we really liked, whether AJ was on our roster or wasn't.

Q. Did you try to get up to 13 with the Eagles? Was it pretty clear all along it's going to be Philly that you did this with?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, that's kind of where it ended up. There was a couple teams that called, and I would say they showed the most interest, and it kind of -- I'd say it accelerated this morning, and spent most of the afternoon kind of working through things. At the end of the day just glad we were able to kind of come to an agreement and make the decision we made.

Q. Much thought to staying at 26 or was that a tough call?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we did. There's still some players obviously that we like, and we just felt the value of the trade for us, it was kind of -- it was too good to pass up because we feel like it allowed us to get some more cracks at players over the next couple nights and the extra pick on Saturday.

Q. You've paid plenty of guys to stay; why not stay in it and negotiate it out with him while you still had the ear of control when this organization has done so poorly at receiver for so long and you finally had a guy?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, again, there was just a lot of circumstances that went into it, a lot of thought, a lot of different things that we had to work through. And you're right, we have compensated players that are on our team, guys in free agency. We have done that.

Again, I just come back to the gap that we were going to have to bridge there, and it just seemed really too far for us to really make any progress, and the return currently for this draft, what we were able to acquire was good value for us.

Q. Did either of you guys get a sense that AJ wanted out?

JON ROBINSON: I think AJ loved it here, but I think -- that would be a better question for AJ.

I think that he and Mike had a great relationship. I had a great relationship with him. Those are just things that we have to work through, and at the end of the day make the tough decisions. Certainly for short-term but also long-term.

Q. You mentioned the gap being too far to bridge. The skyrocketing wide receiver prices this year, how much did that play a part in maybe raising the gap?

JON ROBINSON: I think it did. I think when these guys started to come in contractually, there was kind of a new bar. The bar had kind of been raised on that position. We were trying to work through that and find some common ground. But in the end just felt like it was at a spot we weren't going to be able to get to.

Q. The alternative if you didn't extend him but kept him would have obviously been a tag. Was that something you didn't foresee as a reasonable possibility?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, we didn't get into that. All options were on the table. In the end when the scenario presented

itself to get value pick-wise now, that was the decision that we felt was best.

Q. You've got signed picks now; how much damage do you feel like you can do with that? Do you feel like maybe you use some of this fodder to get targets?

JON ROBINSON: Yeah, that's a great point. I think being at the top of two, you never know until you get closer to your pick if you're going to get action on that pick. We had a couple sniffs on 26 from other teams, but then the Jets came in there late and really gave us one that we didn't feel like we could turn down.

But it does; taking one-on-one, which we were able to get tonight and move it up to the top of the third round, where we're at the top of two, top of three, picked up an extra fifth-round pick, so we've got a two, two threes, two fours, two fives and two sixes, so we've got quite a bit of picks that we think we can move around and give us a little bit of flexibility. If we need to slide back into the bottom of the second if somebody is there, now we've got some ammunition to do that.

Q. Ryan Tannehill and AJ both talked consistently about the chemistry that they had and how they were locked in. How comfortable are you as the coach with what Tannehill will have around him? I know you've got more draft picks but what he'll have around him and his comfort level with Burks and a new receiver in Woods and those sorts of things?

MIKE VRABEL: Yeah, that was going to be the plan. Obviously we start over every year. We're going to get those guys back. Robert is not going to be able to work, but we'll get Treyton in here in a few weeks and then we'll get those guys working. We're excited to start phase 2 and build that process of the trust and understanding and working through some of the new stuff that we're going to be doing.

Q. Is Ryan here yet?

MIKE VRABEL: Our players are off until Monday. The voluntary program starts on Monday. I'll let you guys know on Monday who's here if I talk.

Q. Is it more important for him to get here now with a new wide receiver to work with?

MIKE VRABEL: Well, Treyton will be here after rookie mini camp, which will be on the 13th, I believe.

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