

Tennessee Titans Media Conference

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GM Ran Carthon Coach Brian Callahan

NFL Draft



RAN CARTHON: Just made a big pick for us. I picked 38, taking nose tackle T'Vondre Sweat from the University of Texas. I think his accolades and his play on the field speaks for itself. He's a big man that's going to present problems in the middle. Hard to move. Really looking forward to getting him in.

It was pretty funny, we were all standing there, everybody's you're looking at the screen and my phone starts ringing. I take it out of my pocket and it's Jeff. So I answer, and the first thing he said was, hey, man, I appreciate you.

So Jeff is feeling pretty good. And just being the leader that he is and understanding the magnitude of the pick -- he asked for the kid's number so he can reach out and establish contact. So we're excited about the pick. Coach.

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Yeah, I think we've added, I don't know, maybe 700 pounds worth of player in two picks. That's on purpose. That's by design. It's a big man's league. And you need big people to move the line of scrimmage. We wanted to make sure we invested the right players into the fronts. Those are important parts of building a football team. And hard to pass up people that are that size and that playing ability.

We think that T'Vondre can be a three-down player. He has the ability to push the pocket. He's got explosiveness. He can play the run as good as anybody in the class. And the way that the board unfolded, there was a run on -- the top two receivers left got picked and then there was a bunch of nose tackles that went ripping off the board as well.

You can see it's a premium around the league. And to have players of his caliber inside to pair with Jeffery is -- you should have seen Dennard and Tracy Rucker, they were smiling from ear to ear to add a player like that that to defense.

Hits us right where we needed some size and some strength, and to pair it with Jeffery. And really two additions in the first two days of guys we think can be high-impact players for us.

Q. You mentioned size. Will you work with him to feel out what his exact weight should be? Do you like him right now as far as his size?

RAN CARTHON: Definitely, we think there's a threshold for him to be to maximize who he is, and maximize what we think his three-down ability. So once we get him here, we get our hands on him and we get to get him with Zach (phonetic) and the crew, we'll find that threshold for him and trust and believe that he'll get there and stay there.

Q. Dennard was (indiscernible) like being able to go from a pass rusher to a pass defender. When you look at Sweat and his pressures, how much do you think he'll help you guys in that area?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Quite a bit. I think he's only growing as a pass rusher. A lot of these guys in the interior, they grow and learn as they get experience in the league. But you see his ability to push the pocket.

And to me, as an offensive coach, the guys that I've always had the most issues with is the guys that can collapse the pocket from the interior because you can handle edge rushers. There's things you can do to help and you can chip and you can push the pocket and you can run them over the loop at the top.

But you can't do much inside if you've got two guys pushing the pocket that Jeffery is going to command double teams and he's going to get a chance to push. Not that he'll be the only one rushing, but when you get one-on-ones with a guy that size all he has to do is transition into a bull and push that pocket right back in the quarterback's face. It's hard to deal with. It's challenging.

I think he has that. He has bull rush and pocket push ability. And he'll refine his pass rush as he gets comfortable in the NFL. And he has a chance to be a really good interior player.

Q. How much did you have to vet the incident he had a couple of weeks ago with the DUI?

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RAN CARTHON: We were his first visit after the incident occurred. We brought him in, spent the day with him. If you know him, he's a jovial kid. He's got a great personality. Fun-loving. But you can see that he was extremely affected when we brought him in.

And we spent a lot of time talking about it. I know he was ready to talk about it with anybody that wanted to listen, and he was forthright and honest.

But something that's not documented or that has been reported is we actually went down to visit with him and the family because we wanted to know more and spend time with not only him but see the family and people he surrounds himself with.

So, myself, Cali (phonetic), Tracy Rocker and Anthony Robinson, we flew down to his hometown and spent the morning with him and his mom and his brother and his grandfather and really got to know him as a person and kind of what the expectations would be for us if he was here and kind of put that on the line.

We had some tough conversations while we were there, not only tough conversations with him but tough conversations with his family in the room with the understanding that it's going to take all of us, just like it would be with any other player, just like it's going to be with JC. There's an adjustment period that all of these guys have to go through that not only it's going to take us but it's going to take the people that they spend the most time with outside of here to help us with that.

So we wanted that to come across with his family, have a strong relationship with his representation at Klutch Sports and Nicole Lynn and being able to have all those different touch points. We had a lot of information prior to everything. And, again, us going down, taking that trip to spend time with him and his family is what made us comfortable making this pick.

Q. Ran, you said he was forthright. What did he say? What was his explanation of that night of what happened?

RAN CARTHON: I won't go into the details of that. I know some of the stuff has been reported and you could read about it and whatever he wants to share, he'll share. But basically what he told us and what I got from my intel was it aligned and you could see why those things happened.

He was, again, I'll say from the forthright standpoint, he recognized his mistake and the part that he played in it. But he didn't come through, even though someone hit him,

he didn't use that as an out or cop-out and play the victim part. He accepted his responsibility and what he's learned from it so far.

Q. One of the things you mentioned was a couple of days ago there were guys who were taken off the board because of behavior issues. (Indiscernible) want to clarify what is it about him, what do you notice that to keep him on in spite of this situation?

RAN CARTHON: Because what you heard about him, if you go into the school of just being around, I mean, it was typical stuff that you read from a 17-year-old kid. He entered college at 17, you know what I mean? And everybody in this room went to college. Everyone did things when they were 17, 18 years old. And, again, I've said it before, we tend to hold these kids to a higher standard because they're public faces or they're athletes.

But early on, he enjoyed Austin like most 17-, 18-, 19-, 39-, 40-year-old people do. But he grew up, and he matured. And the reason why we kept him on the board was because we had a visit with him. We know who the person is and we're comfortable with the person.

When you guys meet him, you'll like the person. He's got a great personality. And we felt like there was nothing bad about bringing him in this organization, in this state and in this city.

Q. A lot of deals made in the first 10, 12 picks of the second round. How much action were you getting? How much consideration did you get?

RAN CARTHON: Up until when we walked up here at 4 o'clock with JC, we had, what, about eight, nine calls, eight, nine offers for the pick. We were fielding the calls, listening.

But one thing we talked about was let's see how this board shakes out. We knew there was going to be an early run of receivers. And we knew with the defensive tackles that were right there, it was only a matter of time. And when that run happened you knew there was going to be a run on the corners right there.

And so the receiver run happened early, like we thought. And then as soon as, I think it was Washington traded into the pick and took Johnny Newton, we knew that run was going to happen. It's just the way the board took shape.

Q. Did you continue to get after it started and up until --

RAN CARTHON: Yeah, up until -- because we stepped

out of the room to confer a little bit about where we wanted to go. And we left poor Jon Salge by himself in the room to field all those calls. So between the mainline of getting blown up and our cell phones getting blown up, the phone didn't stop ringing until they announced a pick.

BRIAN CALLAHAN: It's probably important to note that it's -- just because there's phone calls doesn't mean that they're good deals. Doesn't mean that they fit for us. Some of these calls and some of these trades you're dropping down a significant level of player when you start dropping deep into the second.

And sometimes their reciprocal value isn't there because everyone thinks they can try to pull one over and get a deal. And that's not how it works.

There's a cost of doing business, when you want to come up that high, there's things that are required. And some teams meet it, some teams don't.

But I think there's just a world of player we weren't quite ready to dip out of in that high second round that if you drop handful of spots, it changes significantly. So that's just kind of how those trades go sometimes.

Q. Back when Simmons was coming out he had character issues but he turned it around. How much does having him here along with Keondre Coburn, how much does that help you guys feel that Sweat is going to be in a good situation?

RAN CARTHON: It helps tremendously. I've been places and even talking to just different coaches around the league about them liking a certain level of player. And a certain situation comes to mind from a couple of years ago, I won't go into, but of a coach saying I love this player and I want him, but our room isn't strong enough to deal with any issues that may come.

So having a Jeff in the room, that helps. And again Coach Rocker, and then you have Clinton McMillan, who has coached on the college level, who's recruited these kids, he has relationships with these guys. And even like for Sweat specifically, Keondre Coburn is someone he looks up to. That was his big brother figure when they were at Texas together.

So he listens to him. And they still talk and they've talked all year. They're really good friends. They connected here when he brought him in on his visit. So having those different touch points in the room, it's just like anything else. When you have children and you could tell your children the same message over and over and over but it's different when they hear it from a peer or sibling or

someone outside of the parent that they look up to. So having those different touch points helps.

Q. The 31 pass pressures by Sweat last year, is that one of the things that maybe people don't know about that makes him special?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Yes, that's why we think he's a three-down stop player. He can and has pressured the quarterback because he's got tremendous strength and power in the middle of the pocket. And so when you're able to do that, like I said, it's a problem for quarterbacks. Quarterbacks don't like the pocket in their face. They like lanes. They like places to slide and escape.

When you constrict it and push it, there's nowhere to go, you can't step up, it makes it challenging.

So we think that he's got the capability to be a really dynamic player and on all three downs and has the ability to pass rush. I don't think he is strictly a first and second down run stopper. I think he has real ability to affect the quarterback.

Q. (Indiscernible) to 106 going to seem like forever?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Yes.

RAN CARTHON: I think everybody's trying to figure out what we're going to do with the time.

Q. (Indiscernible) try to get to the third or --

RAN CARTHON: It's probably unlikely at this point. Never say never. Once we go back, we examine the board -- I'm kind of cheating looking over at the cameras.

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Watching the TV.

RAN CARTHON: I'll pass it to coach so he can talk, I'll take a look at the board. I'll take a peek so he can look. We'll get back see how our board is taking shape. With our plan, I would say we're comfortable where we are.

Q. What did you learn about each other over this last week?

RAN CARTHON: I don't know that I learned anything new over the last week, I'd say. But one thing I do know is I can trust this man. I can trust him. I can trust his decision-making. I know that nine times out of ten we see things pretty similar. When we don't, we can talk through it and see each other's vantage point and why the other may feel the way they feel. That's probably what I've learned.

We probably spent too much time together at this point.

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Ran needs to go on vacation for a little bit. Got a couple more days.

RAN CARTHON: Couple more. I'm counting. I promise you I'm out of here on Thursday.

Q. Do you Sweat's body fat is?

RAN CARTHON: I don't know what my body fat is today. I don't know.

BRIAN CALLAHAN: He's a big man that has big man issues, and weight and body fat is part of that. He has to work hard to make sure he maintains it. And we'll work with him to set the weight that he needs to be at and the expectation is he'll be at that weight. I informed him when we made the visit down there, it's also very expensive when you're not at the weight you're supposed to be at.

He's well aware of what that cost can be, and it's significant if you're significantly overweight. But I trust that he's going to do what's been asked of him and hit the weight number that he used to be at, and it's for the best for both his production and his playing and for us as a team.

So I think all those things have been conveyed very clearly to him and I don't anticipate it being an issue for us.

Q. When did you all take that visit down to his hometown?

RAN CARTHON: It was a week ago. A week ago today.

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Feels like a year ago.

RAN CARTHON: It was a week ago today. We just got up early, flew down to Houston and love Houston because you love the food. And so we ordered some good food and had an unbelievable brunch, and we were there for a couple of hours and literally it was back in Nashville midday. And so again we thought it was just important -- to the kid's credit, when he came in, for lack of a better way to put it, he was just defensive. He wanted to defend himself and talk about it and clear his name, if you will.

Obviously you're great with that because it arms you with the information. A lot of what we do -- you heard us talk about it -- learn the fit of the person. We wanted to know the person a little more. We got to. But I felt it was important for us to spend even more time with him, so that's what allowed us to take the trip.

And, again, I've said it during the free agency process,

thanks to Miss Amy for allowing us, giving us the ability to make that snap of a decision and be able to do it and get back here home quickly.

Q. (Inaudible) that close to see one particular play, or was there anybody else during this process?

RAN CARTHON: We did it last year and you guys didn't know.

No. We didn't get the player. I know Paul was going to come with the hook. You had your tweet ready, huh?

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