

Tennessee Titans Media Conference

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Coach Brian Callahan

NFL Draft Press Conference



BRIAN CALLAHAN: Obviously incredibly excited to add Cam to our football team. He's a fantastic young man, a very talented quarterback. He has all the qualities that you look for in the position, and everything about him as a person and a player fits everything that we're looking for. And it's a really exciting moment, I think, for our organization, for our coaching staff, for our front office. I think most importantly for our fans.

This is an awesome moment for us to be able to add a player the caliber of Cam Ward. And can't wait to get to work. We've got a long road ahead to get ready to go. We don't play until September but there's a lot of work to be done in the meantime, but incredibly excited about adding Cam and to get started and get back to work and coach football and stop pretending about all the things we have to pretend about over the course of the last couple months and be able to get going and move forward. It's time to start doing some football.

Q. What were some of the traits, I guess, you touched on some but both as a player and as a person, could you elaborate?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: So the football part, incredibly poised. Has a great knowledge of both offensive scheme and defensive structure. He has what I would call a natural ability to fill space.

He can see and understand and feel without explaining exactly what it is he's feeling. He just feels it. That goes with the way he moves in the pocket. That goes with the way he sees and fills space in the defense. He's an incredibly quick processor. He has incredible tools on top of it. He's got size. Athleticism. Cam is one of those guys I think growing up was sort of good at everything. He's got a really unique athletic ability. He can move the ball with his feet. He can throw it. His releases is one of the quickest releases I've seen and he's incredibly accurate. All the things you look for from a physical standpoint and mental standpoint showed up. The intangible part of it is what separated him for us because he's got his work ethic

is top-notch. He's got a chip on his shoulder.

He's trying to prove every day that he's worthy, and that won't change the minute he gets here; it will stay the same. His journey is unique. He's experienced a lot of things when it comes to new places, new faces, new teammates, and his ability to connect with all of them was incredibly impressive. I think when you look at players that have done those things over time, their chances of connecting in an NFL locker room, you just get to see so much more of it, and their ability to raise the level of play, to raise the organization around them, Cam has done that at really every place he's been over his college career.

Then you just look at how he was raised, the family he comes from. His parents are incredibly impressive people. They raised him in what you'd like to call the right way, I think. And that shows up. That shows up in how he treats people. It shows up in how he interacts people.

When he came on his 30 visit here he interacted with our building. There wasn't a person in the building that didn't come away impressed. He walked all over it. I brought him all over. We went upstairs, downstairs, I think his interactions, if you asked anybody in the building, were really, really positive and people came away with, you know, there's an aura to him. He draws people to him.

I think everyone felt the same thing when he came in our building, which was really cool to see.

Q. The offer that Giants made sounded pretty hefty. When did that come along the timeline and was there a temptation at that time?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Yeah, we went through the process the correct way. We considered all things available to us. As far as when and where and how much, that doesn't really matter now at this point.

But there was conversations. There were offers. We did our due diligence. Ultimately we felt that Cam was a player we weren't going to let go anywhere else except here to Tennessee. We arrived at that consensus. Took a lot of work to get there. I don't think at any point since we made that decision, really wasn't any conversations past that.

I said it before that I think when you have an opportunity to



add a caliber of quarterback like Cam, those things are priceless. There's no price you put on that from draft capital standpoint because those players end up being what you think they're capable of. Those picks don't matter when it comes to future picks and draft capital because he's got the ability to be a really fantastic quarterback.

Q. What does confidence built around Cam look like, and how does that differ from what Titans fans saw last year?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: We'll get into that as we get moving, but there were some things he did in college that he was really successful at. There are some plays that we had some commonalities on. I think if you dive into the film, you'll see it.

There's definitely some carry-over concepts. Cam is a pocket-passing drop-back quarterback. He's got all the things that you need to run those concepts, to see the field, to read through progressions. There's some carry-over from things we do and he's done.

We'll make sure that all the offense that we put in is the things that he's comfortable. And that's the idea when you're trying to help a young quarterback be successful. He's got along way to go, though. He's got to earn it. He's got to earn those reps and those rights to have all that input and dialogue. But I have no doubt that he'll do the requisite work.

Q. You explained multiple, in detail, some of the things you like about him. But if you had to pick one particular feature and talent trait that he has, what would it be to make you believe that he could turn things around for this organization?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: To me, it's the leadership he ability and the way he's able to make those around him better. That to me is a huge part of the position, and that's what I think ultimately separates -- there's a lot of talented players, a lot of guys that can throw the football, a lot of guys that can play the position. But the guys that transcend have unique ability to connect with their teammates and raise the level of everyone around them. I think that's what he's shown to do really at every stop he's been and hopefully that continues here.

Q. What becomes your biggest task now in terms of maximizing his ability and his traits?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Well, we've got to start and get to work. You start at the basics. He's got to learn the snap count. He's got to learn the formations. He's got to learn the things, get in and out of the huddle to start. Like I said,

there's a lot of work ahead. A lot of things we have to do to get ready to play in September but I think we're all up to task. It's exciting, fun, to be able to do that. He's willing to put in the work as well. And we get a lot of time with these guys now, especially with the rookies as they come in. They're really not part of the most of the time limits of the day so we get all kinds of extra time on top of that.

So looking forward to it. Looking forward to spending a lot of time with him, learning the offense, learning him, learning his likes and dislikes. He's got a lot of work ahead learning his teammates, too. Learning what guys do well, learning how to communicate with them. A lot of things to do and ultimately not a lot of time but we'll get there.

Q. What did he say over the phone when you guys gave him a call?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: I think he was a bit overcome by the moment. Even though it's something that probably wasn't a huge surprise. I think that's just a big moment. Number one pick in the NFL Draft. You have your family there. Something he's worked his entire life to be at. All I told him at the moment was just it's cool, enjoy every second of it, and enjoy it for your family. It's a culmination of a lot of work to get to this point. And I reminded him there's a lot of work to be done. This is kind of the ending of one journey, the beginning of another. We've got a lot of things to get done. He was excited, and he said in no uncertain terms he's got a play that he really likes. We have the play. But he said, in very certain words, that you better put that play in. I said we got it, we're putting it in, don't worry. I know he's ready to get going.

Q. You said on Tuesday that during this whole process, the evaluation process for the last couple months, I believe Mike said there wasn't one clear aha moment where it was obvious he wanted Cam Ward or he was the guy. For you, through the last couple months, was there a moment that really sparked you in terms of falling in love with him or believing that, yes, this is our guy?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: I wouldn't say there was one particular moment that led to that consensus decision. I watched the tape. I liked his tape. I was really intrigued by the talent that I saw. There's just so much of playing the quarterback position is neck-up in this league and the rest of it was where we had to find out the answers. And I would say that the first in-person experience we had with him at the combine in our formal interview setting was super impressive. And that to me was sort of the starting point was, oh, he really might have all the things that we're looking for.

And again there was still a lot of things to get to, but that moment was the first time where I felt like that he might at that time he might fit what we're looking for. And then we had to go through the rest of it, too. It was only a 15-ish minute conversation but you could tell right away there was something about him made me confident that if we kept uncovering the things we needed to uncover, the answers would be there that we were looking for.

Q. The traits you listed with respect to Cam Ward, how much does that correlate over to Joe Burrow in your experience with him?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: It's hard to compare players like that. I think comparing those guys as players is challenging because they're in such just different places in their careers. There is some commonalities in terms of what you look for in a quarterback. And those are all things, I think, that you could argue that Joe's got plenty of those, too. But I think I'm excited just for Cam to learn how to be Cam and show what's unique about his game because all these guys have something unique and they do something special. Cam's no different, and I'm excited to see what that looks like in the NFL. We've seen it in college now. We get to see it at this level.

Q. What's the balance do you think between being patient with a rookie quarterback coming in versus obviously wanting to win more next season?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Yeah, it doesn't change for me. We want to win as much as possible. We want to put our team in position to win as many games as we can. And the development of the quarterback is a part of that process. And you want to be able to put him in position to have success as well with what you ask him to do, how you help around him and how you play defense, how you run the football, how you protect him. Those are all the things you are focused on put him in the best possible situations for him to be successful early and that usually translates into helping you win games on top of it. I don't know if that's the best way to answer the question, but I just think you never sacrifice really one for the other. You're trying to do both at the same time.

Q. Do you plan to start him right away?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: We'll see. We don't need to worry about that until September. I think he's got a lot of work to do. We'll do the requisite work. But I don't think we need to get into naming starters and talking about all that. He's got his work ahead of him and we'll name starters in September.

Q. Critiques of Cam usually surrounds risk taking,

playing hero ball from time to time. Did you see any evidence of that, or what was your kind of take on those potential --

BRIAN CALLAHAN: I think anytime you have quarterbacks that have talent, that have the ability to make those types of plays, they tend to try to make them and they're confident in their ability to do it, and most of the time the guys that I've been around that put those types of plays out there is they're going to make a whole lot more of them than they miss. That's the mentality you want to have.

I think he's got that mentality. I think he's got the talent to do it. There's definitely things, where, if you asked him, there's a couple of throws, yeah, that probably wasn't the best idea. He'd go, yeah, you're probably right. And that's okay; that's part of maturing and growing in the game.

You learn how to play quarterback at the NFL level, which there's a balance to that. There's a time to be efficient, a time to take completions, a time to throw the ball away and there's also a time to let your talent take over and all the things that God gave you, allow to put it on display.

I think he understands that, which is the part I think is the most encouraging for me is that all the things he did -- any throws he made that you would argue were hero ball throws, he had very good reason why he did it and was also aware if it was one that was in a bad spot he shouldn't have made that particular throw, he is aware I probably shouldn't have done that there. I think that's half the battle with those things.

Q. As a coach, how do you go about balancing that where you want him to make those plays but you also don't want him to take those risks and put the ball in harm's way?

BRIAN CALLAHAN: Yeah, you just try to teach it and coach it as much as you can. A lot of it doesn't come up until you start playing games. Practice to me is a time and a place to experiment, to try those throws and to see what you can get away with. I've always felt that way with quarterbacks. They're allowed to be aggressive and find out what you can get away with versus what coverages.

So you don't really know until games when those things start to happen. And I think he's got the requisite awareness and intelligence to understand when and where it's time to play the game the right way and then when you need to make a big play. He's going to make a whole lot more big ones than he is bad ones. But the truth of it is there will be moments where probably there is a bad play in there. He's going to be a young player as a rookie

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

quarterback. And it's not going to be perfect. We're not looking for it to be perfect. But I think he's got the intelligence and the ability to learn from all those things, too.

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