

Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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John Schneider

Mike Macdonald

Weekday Press Conference



JOHN SCHNEIDER: Welcome. We haven't been in here in a minute. Yeah, thanks for coming out. Big thank yous to Mike and his staff with all the work, preparation. Obviously the scouts, all the hard work they put in, being away from their families in the spring and the fall.

Out here for the last two weeks, three weeks. Sam Ramsden, David Strickland, all the docs, just everybody involved in the process. It's been a great process this year.

Yeah, just really, really thankful and grateful to be getting ready for our 16th draft here.

Fire away.

Q. John, we asked you about this at the combine, all throughout the process. Having Mike and the coaching staff more involved than they were able to be last year, now that you've been through all this, what was that like working with them?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It's been outstanding, having the majority of the offensive staff. New staff having been through the process several times at different buildings, organizations, has helped as well. I think everybody just has a better feel for each other naturally.

Mike and I are constantly, like, evaluating the evaluators, right? It's coaches, scouts, doctors, trainers. It's everybody. Yeah, just a much stronger comfort level.

Q. Mike, for you, same kind of thing. Now that you've gone through all this experience doing this with John, what has it been like for you?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I think you have a really strong feel for the cadence, about what happens and when, what those conversations are like. But just like John said, I mean, it's year two, just understanding our process and how we do it, it really helps.

Q. John, how do you avoid all the information you have available to you overthinking as you get closer to the draft? What are the points that change your opinion the most about a player in the process?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Were you here yesterday? Did you see the draft board yesterday (smiling)? It's funny you say that. It's a great question.

We're just kind of wrapping up everybody's opinions. We'll get to a spot where Mike and I just can walk through every scenario, so we're not in a position to overthink things. Especially once we get to the weekend, we want to be able to have it look like we want it to look, you know? Our kind of guys. Just be able to maneuver and pick good players for this talented staff.

Q. At the league meetings, you mentioned that the compensation for trading back has kind of changed in recent years. Have you figured out why that is?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, there's just tons of different... A lot of people used to use Jimmy Johnson's grading scale, right, the points system. Now with the advent of analytics, you have salary cap numbers, you have a lot of people that just have different systems.

What we're doing over the next two days is really having our guys make sure they're contacting the other teams, the teams that they're responsible for in terms of trades, and making sure that we're in the same vicinity because everybody seems to be using different, yeah, trading scales, points systems, yeah.

You want to be able to move in a very fast manner. We want to get all that kind of laid out ahead of time. You don't want to be, like, in the moment and having to be negotiating a ton. There's a certain level of negotiation that goes on there, but you don't want to be taking up more than the decision-making process, more time in the decision-making process.

Q. Has analytics adjusted how your chart has maybe changed over the years?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, yep. We've switched it a little bit, yeah.



Q. John, you never traded up in the first round, but you've traded up multiple times on day two. Is there a reason for that?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: No. Just hasn't happened, yeah.

Q. Among first-round picks, there haven't been any trades yet.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I was talking to a gentleman this morning about that from another team. It sounded like last week people were going to be active, then nothing's really happened, so...

We're just trying to stay in contact with everybody. I don't know. It's hard to tell. I don't know if that's just because of what the top of the first round looks like. I don't know.

Q. Mike, there's all sorts of hybrid players. There's some in this draft that play off-ball linebacker and also play edge. Seems like a potentially challenging combination in third round, take a linebacker off or on. How do you think about the new hybrid players?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, they're really exciting. I think especially this year, when you're evaluating these guys, you try to have a vision for what their role would be immediately, then what it would grow to.

But it felt really clear from our coaches, from how I saw it, there's several guys that are in the draft that will be really exciting.

Q. John, you mentioned to us at the combine that you made your biggest mistakes when you've pushed up a guy up the board for need. When does need actually come into play? Is it later rounds? When you actually form your draft board?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It ends up pretty much being all the way through. But really your need ends up being part of our grading system, too. We're comparing prospects to our players. It's just the way we do it, not necessarily the rest of the National Football League. What does our team look like?

So, yeah, when I was talking about at the beginning, sometimes you think you're just filling a hole, and you're jumping that player ahead of more talented players.

Q. Back to the trade value thing. Has there been much...

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I'm not going to give trade values.

I'm not going to text it to you (laughter).

Q. Is there a big discrepancy in how teams value future picks?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: No. Everybody's pretty much on the same page there, yeah. You're looking one up every year, so... That's kind of how everybody's viewed that.

Now, some people try to put that into a points system. We don't.

Q. John, what do you think of where your roster is right now after the moves you've made this off-season, bringing Drew Lock back, some of the recent adds around the edges since the last time we talked to you and where you're sitting before the draft?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: We like it. We like where we're at.

MIKE MACDONALD: Fired up.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I think we can just go pick darn good football players. We're excited to have four of those quarterbacks. We have three quarterbacks that have thrown for over three thousand yards in a season. All of 'em can move. That's a pretty cool group. Getting Drew back here...

Drew is very well-respected in the building. It's great to get him back here, into the mix. He had other opportunities. We just stayed in touch with his agent and wanted to be able...

We spent time with him in Florida so Mike could get to know him a little bit when we were down there. He's just a great, great person, great competitor added to this building.

Q. With the roster, right now, how exciting is it to have the five picks to even add to that, whether it's positions of need or depth at spots?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: That's exciting. I mean, yeah, we were in there yesterday afternoon staring at it for a while. It's fun. There's a lot of room for activity, so... Movie line.

Yeah, it just provides us with more opportunities to either just stay and pick good players or maneuver around.

Q. What did you learn about Drew when you got to spend some time with him?

MIKE MACDONALD: I think it's exactly what John said. Anytime you have an opportunity to spend time with the guys outside of the football setting, it's a great opportunity

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to connect with them, just spend time with them.

Just a great, great guy. You can tell he fits in great with the locker room, the leadership qualities he brings. For him, it's probably not easy to be in those settings with me not having met him, being able to move and shake, have a good time, talk about things outside of football. It was a lot of fun.

We stayed in contact, too. Just a big fan of Drew.

Q. Trades and all that aside, where do you feel like your roster is at in terms of having a locker room full of players with the right edge that you want, personality types?

MIKE MACDONALD: I mean, this is an interesting timing for me, like, as a coach because normally you're about a week or two into the process as draft week comes up. I'm excited to start our process as a team to kind of see how everything is going to kind of come into focus over the next eight to 10 weeks and into camp.

I'm really excited about our guys. Just today a lot of the guys are starting to trickle in. We start officially tomorrow. Seeing guys we haven't seen in a good bit. Just like their excitement for the off-season program. Feels like spirits are really high, enthusiasm's high.

We got a lot of work to do, but I feel like the guys' (indiscernible) is in the right spot. We have a great opportunity in front of us.

Q. John, one area that keeps coming up in terms of needs is offensive line. Graded low by evaluators, analytics, in terms of that position group. Do you think there's validity to that? Is there some validity to that?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I think it's an area of need, yeah, absolutely. I think it's been very well-documented throughout the spring.

But it's also a little bit of a lazy narrative because every team is looking for offensive linemen. We're trying to create guys every single year. It used to be when I started in the league with Ron Wolf, it was a free agent had to have three redeeming qualities. Now, especially with offensive linemen, you have guys maybe in the fourth round that have two redeeming qualities: tall and long, strong and quick, whatever.

It's just happened. It's not anything that anybody in football is happy about, to be honest with you. It's an area that hasn't been developed as well as the other side of the ball for one reason or another.

I think it just fundamentally comes down to, like, if you're going to be playing football at a young age, you want to go sack the quarterback and do your sack dance, or do you want to go block for a running back or a quarterback. I think it comes down to that.

Q. There's kind of a dearth of talent there. You maybe have to adjust your draft board and push guys up farther than maybe their grade would justify. Are there other positions you see in that? Quarterback seems like maybe one. Is this a unique situation or are there other teams you see this happen?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: No, it's just quarterback, quarterback and offensive linemen.

The position, too, Mike has been there, they don't get to spend much time with these guys in college anymore. We used to be able to go to a practice and spend the first 25 minutes watching in an individual period. Now you go there and it feels like guys are out there running plays.

Things were much better when we had NFL Europe. We were able to put guys in there and have coaches, experienced coaches, training these guys away from the building and getting those extremely important reps.

Again, same thing with the quarterback position.

Q. Mike, I know your ability to talk to guys is a little bit limited right now. What has been the feedback you've gotten about where you are heading directionally, the shift in having so many guys that have been a big part of this team not be here?

MIKE MACDONALD: I think I kind of answered that the last time.

There's a lot of enthusiasm. Our guys are really excited. I'm going off the conversations I've had with the guys on our roster. It's not going to make a comment about the guys that weren't here and the guys that are here.

There's a lot of respect for the guys that are on our football team. A lot of prior relationships, too, that have kind of come back into the mold. So guys are excited about kind of renewing that relationship that they've had with those guys and being in this setting here at the VMAC every day.

I'm really, really encouraged. I'm really excited. This time tomorrow we'll be finishing up our first day. Go do a day two, do that for the next 10 weeks. It will be a lot of fun.

Q. Acquiring Drew, what does that mean for the other



two?

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, it means that those guys are going to be competing. Both guys know that. Jaren is part of the mix, too. He's going to be competing with those guys.

Anytime you're adding competition to a room, that side of the ball on the football team, it's good for us especially when they're great players and great guys. It's going to be fun to see how it shakes out.

Q. When you spend time with a draft prospect, what stands out to you as: This is my kind of player? Is it a football knowledge thing? Attitude? What gets your attention?

MIKE MACDONALD: From my perspective, I think it's kind of irresponsible to say like I can get this guy figured out in 20 minutes or an hour or a day. You got to go in with the perspective of there's not, like, one singular thing. Oh, that was a red flag, can't touch this guy. I don't know. Feel like that's a little overconfident in the process.

Where my role is, in my opinion, it's another data point to augment like what all the scouts have done, the rest of the work our coaches have been doing with all their interviews. I want to just have an opportunity to connect with that person for that time that we have that opportunity.

Really excited about the guys that I have met and been able to connect with over this process. There's a lot of great guys, great human beings in this draft that have awesome stories.

It gets you excited about the opportunity to coach some of these guys when they're in the building. You get a better feel for who they are, what has got them to this point.

Q. Mike, what did you learn in the off-season program last year?

MIKE MACDONALD: We have a very clear vision about what we're trying to create and what it takes to get to that point. It's not just me sitting there saying... It's everybody. I think all the coaches, we have a great alignment in how we want to go about our business.

Again, we've done it before together. We've gone through that football loop already. Talking to one of our players about an hour ago. He knows who we're talking about. But, like, they know there's a reason behind what we're doing and why, what we're trying to chase.

It's not some big secret on what day in, day out looks like.

We can get that message spread amongst the guy so we can hit the ground running.

Q. You talk about having the right guys in the room, not just on the field. How do you find good humans and guys that are going to be dogs on the field?

MIKE MACDONALD: I can rattle off the guys on our roster. Leonard Williams, Jarran Reed, Ken Walker. I can rattle off a ton of guys on our football team that are great human beings here, in the community, with their families. Guys that you want to emulate and are leaders for us. But on the field they're not to be messed with. Those are the types of guys we're looking for.

Q. Back to quarterbacks. Are you cool with having three on the roster because of the experience you have right there?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOHN SCHNEIDER: No, I was talking about it the other day. It's hard to maneuver around with quarterbacks, to get to a safe place where you feel like you're in an ideal world of acquiring quarterbacks. I've talked about it before.

Only drafted two. To Brian's point, you got to be careful how far you push those guys. But no, it does not.

Q. (Indiscernible) about Sam Howell potential trade, is that accurate?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, that's accurate. We have a great relationship with Bruce, his agent. Bruce is very well-known and respected throughout the National Football League. He has a ton of contacts, as well.

It's a very open dialogue.

Q. Would that be something you'd be open to, moving Howell?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I don't know. We're not there yet.

Q. You mentioned quarterbacks in the draft. Danger of moving them up. There's kind of a perception they get over-drafted or whatever because of the value of quarterbacks. Have you found that? Has that become more commonplace through the years?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: You're just talking historically?

Q. Yes.



JOHN SCHNEIDER: Has it increased over the years? Yeah, I've seen it. I talked to Jay about this, Bernie Quinn. It's not their fault that these guys are supposed to be the first pick in the draft. You know what I mean? It's just the way this world is right now. They're talked about forever.

We were just talking to our 30-visit guys the other day. Like, this is a process you're going through, how you're acquired in the draft, enjoy it with your family, but get ready to work because the guys are coming in next week, the team is coming in getting ready to work. Guess what? On Monday, everybody is going to be talking about next year's class. We'll be talking about it all year, you know?

I get it. It's fun. It's great entertainment. But it is that. It's entertainment.

So what's happened especially at that position is that, I mean, it's most important. I mean, it's the most important position on the team. So yeah, over the years there's been a lot of people that have been I don't want to say over-drafted, but just based on the class can be pushed up.

Q. John, a lot of people try to be secretive about their draft perspectives, the draft board. Is there an effort put into throwing people off the trail, misinformation? Do you find other teams actively putting out misinformation?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I don't know if it's misinformation. We were just talking on the way down. Called a team. Was asking if we were going to move down or move up or whatever. I don't know what the conversation was really. Like we want to move up. Yeah, okay, we'd be open to discussing something like that. Then it was like, Well, I think we're actually going to trade back. What did we just talk about? I don't understand (smiling). I want that five minutes back.

We don't do a lot of it. We did a long time ago when I was with the Packers, just joking with guys. I think I told you guys with Ki-Jana Carter. He was going to be the first or second pick in the draft. We were picking like 24, 25, something like that. He was kind of complaining about being in our room, like filling out the interview sheet. One of our guys was telling him we were going to spread some rumors about him, he was going to fall. He didn't like that very much, but yeah.

Some teams do it. Some teams don't. I think once you get down to it, like, these conversations right now are very, very periphery. Last year, like, I remember it wasn't until the day of, like Thursday, where, All right, well, man, I think

there are going to be six quarterbacks taken. That wasn't as much of a smoke screen as we thought it was going to be.

Q. Mike, being at Michigan, does that help at all in this whole thing or has it been too many years now?

MIKE MACDONALD: Oh, no, that definitely helps. Like, I mean, Jay Harbaugh, Chris Partridge, those guys have great feel. They were there more recently than I was.

Anybody that has prior relationships or exposures through recruiting is always really helpful.

Q. How does your understanding of the college game help in this whole thing? College game wasn't even the same five years ago.

MIKE MACDONALD: I don't know. I don't think it affects it that much, honestly. It's the same tape we've been watching for years. How we built our defense at Michigan, probably two parallel lanes there that don't convert.

Q. A non-football question. Last week you raised over \$5 million. Over the years of doing that, what is the community support for that and that event come to mean to you?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, Traci and I are very grateful to the Seahawks and everybody that gives to this cause. It's obviously near and dear to our hearts with Ben's situation.

Just, like, this community, Brad Brotherton did an event right when I got here. I attended it. It was for cancer research. I told Traci, like, As soon as we have an opportunity, we get settled, we got to do this because this community's amazing. People are extremely giving.

I think it's like \$70,000 to \$80,000 a year now for treatments. It's hard for a lot of families.

It's been overwhelming. It's just a really awesome reflection on the community here in Seattle, state of Washington.

Q. I think you said on the radio you were cautioning against calling the quarterback class weak, not very good. In general, position aside, when someone says actually a class is good, what do you hear? What do you have to hear to say yes?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: You don't really know for two, three years really. I mean, what we tend to do is kind of beat it up really throughout the process. While you're getting to know the people and the competitors, it's like, Wow.

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All throughout the draft you can see, like, the strengths, what we think would be amazing for the coaches to buy into, get excited about, what would make a great Seahawk.

Again, getting back to the entertainment portion, I understand why people are on TV talking about this or that. This draft looks like this...

It's that. It's entertainment.

Q. John, going back to a process question. I've heard you mention the openness of challenge.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I'm sorry?

Q. The openness of challenge, how you're listening to everybody in your team in terms of having that comfortable discussion where they can bring in something that you might not have known.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Oh, yeah.

Yeah, we have a very open process. We listen to everybody. Whatever information we can get, the more the better.

It's about getting through the information and making sense of it and coming to a conclusion.

Am I saying that the right way? Is that what you're asking about, the draft process?

Q. Yes, it is. It's something you said with Dave and Bob.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, no, it's listening to all the coaches, the scouts, Roy, Sue, David Strickland, Dr. Ed. Anybody that's able to spend time with the players, these are all contact points, points of information for us to take in.

We'd be silly not to listen to everybody and get as much information as we possibly can to make the right decisions.

Q. How have you changed in terms of being open through all these years, getting consensus? How have you changed?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think it's a self scout every year. I'm constantly looking at what we can do, how do I improve, how do we improve the team, the process. We're constantly looking at that and trying to evolve.

I don't think we ever say this is set in stone. It's either one way or the other. I think we're very pliable. I think when

you put your head in the sand and dig in, that's not a remedy for success.

Q. John, there's obviously different parts of the football calendar. Where does this rank for you as your favorite part of the year, compared to other parts of the year?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I mean, this is the most fun, getting ready for a draft. I dreamt about this as a kid. Like, Paul Zimmerman, getting the Sports Illustrated. You get the Sports Illustrated one week before the draft. It was like there's a mock draft in there. God rest his soul, he's passed away now. I don't know how many mock draft 4.0s or 7.5s he had. He only had his one.

This is the most exciting time because it's like this influx of new talent that's coming in, respecting the past, respecting who's here, then bringing in this new group of guys that everybody has done an amazing job of spending time with and identifying.

Q. The emphasis on the quality of the players, the prospect, what makes him tick, has the NIL era made that even more clearly defined, you can tell more about a player coming out of college, the money he made?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: You want that one?

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I think it's too early to tell. I think we're really getting gassed up in that process. When we were at Michigan, it just started. That was '21. I guess we're four years in now. Probably more returns on that over the next couple years.

I think if you put more eggs in one basket one way or the other, I think it might be a little dangerous. You start attributing it to certain things, you may or may not be correct. That might not be the right way to go.

Q. Are the middle, later parts of the draft aren't maybe as strong in the NIL era because guys could get more money going back to school than they would be a fifth or sixth round pick?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, that's happened. For some reason this year's group, it feels... I don't know if we spent so much time with these guys. It seems like it's pretty strong throughout.

But yeah, that's legit. A lot of guys stay in. Fifth on down probably.

Q. Does that make smaller school guys, two Division IIs in the last three years, make them even more worth



scrutinizing because maybe their road hasn't been as easy, they're not getting paid?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: No, because it's all part of the same group. They're all part of I guess one big class.

Q. (No microphone.)

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, we'll answer that at a later date.

Q. How do Klint Kubiak and John Benton affect the way you guys might be evaluating offensive linemen in this round?

MIKE MACDONALD: I think the system has been defined, and they've been running it for quite a long time.

I think what's cool about these guys, you could make the mistake of saying, Hey, we're going to be really myopic, this is what we need, we're not budging. They're not like that. They're kind of seeing the whole player, then having a vision for how they would fit with us.

Definitely understand, like, what we're going to be asking them to do is really clear.

Q. John, is there still music in the draft room? What's on the playlist? Who is in charge of that now? Is it still Bob Marley like 15 years ago?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: People are getting tired of me playing that. We want other stuff.

Yeah, my son Jack is coming back. That will probably be his job, if I can get him to turn it down at the appropriate times. He's way more hip than I am, so...

It changes throughout the weekend, but yeah.

Q. John, WIAA sanctioned flag football today. This has been an organization that cares about pushing flag football forward. Your reaction to that news?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Amazing. That's pretty cool. State of Washington, the Seahawks, the people upstairs do a great job getting out in the community, impacting all flag football, women's flag football. We had a camp here this weekend with a bunch of people here spending time with young people, future prospects.

No, it's pretty exciting.

Q. Do you have any update on how Uchenna is doing?

MIKE MACDONALD: I don't think it's changed since we last talked. Excited. He's in a good spot.

Q. Anytime you're calling a guy you're about to pick, knowing it's a life-changing phone call, what is that like for you?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: It's really exciting. It's much more fun than negotiating a contract, I'll say that (smiling).

Yeah, we're going to get the area guys doing it more, as well. These guys spend so much time with the individuals now, it's pretty awesome.

I was saying to Aaron Hiney today, Would you mind calling such and such's agent to see if we can get him hooked up with coaches?

He was like, Why don't I just call him myself?

Even better.

These guys do a great job, everybody, creating relationships with these guys. It's pretty cool to have free agents in here later on, three, four, five years later, giving us crud for not taking them because they really wanted to come here and stuff like that. The relationships they've developed with the area scouts over the years...

Q. What caused you to say you're going to do that this year?

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Just the experience that Mike and I have. Coach Carroll for years being able to have that call. It's fun, exciting deal to hear the enthusiasm in their voice. Some guys are screaming. Some guys are crying. Some guys don't pick up their phones.

MIKE MACDONALD: That's the one I was thinking of (laughter).

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