

# Seattle Seahawks Media Conference

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**John Schneider**

**Mike Macdonald**

Weekday Press Conference



JOHN SCHNEIDER: Thanks for coming out. We're getting ready for our 17th draft year, which is amazing. Time flies.

I want to thank everybody involved in the process, whether that's people in the kitchen, EK's group, obviously the scouts, the coaches, Dave's group.

Yeah, you know, everything that goes into it, the psychology of it, the medical group as well.

Yeah, just huge thanks to everybody. We had a really cool process. We just got done with the coaches on Saturday, and more meetings this morning.

Yeah, so we'll have -- kind of getting a feel with what's going on in the league, starting a lot of calls this week with our guys upstairs, Nolan and Trent, Willie, Matt Berry, Aaron, and those guys. The process has been awesome.

Obviously we kind of were able to tweak some things with rookie free agency, because it's going to be a big deal for us. You know, Dave's point earlier just a couple of minutes ago, we do have a young football team, and we've got a lot of second-year players on our roster.

With that, do you have any questions?

**Q. What, if anything, do you tweak about the process when you look at number of draft picks that you have compared to past years?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: You mean the lack thereof? Yes (laughing). Yeah, we just attacked it. I don't want to say exactly what we did, but we just did some extra meetings and feel like it's going to help us in the future, because we kind of streamlined some things with the coaching staff and feel like we're just kind of out ahead a little bit.

Better maybe than in the past. Moving towards the future I

think it's going to be an awesome part of our process. Just the time focused on free agency.

**Q. What did you learn from the 2021 draft? Obviously it was a different year compared to the other 15 that you've been in Seattle, taken at least eight picks in every other draft except for that one.**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Well, that was -- I mean, shoot, that was kind of an interesting time, right? We were getting ready for -- when you look at how we scouted and using all the Zoom calls and all the FaceTime stuff we do now, we were really just confronted with that. It's really helped. Now it's just a part of our whole process.

The scouts and the coaches do an awesome job with it, so really the process of evaluating the guys, kind of getting to know them, spending more time with them on the Zooms really helped.

**Q. This is your third draft with Mike and this coaching staff. How have you seen as you've gotten to know each other better and the coaching staff better just that process evolve preparing for a draft with this coaching staff in?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, they're coming around with their sense of humor. No --

MIKE MACDONALD: That's true.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: No, it's really the most fun part of the process is when we spend those days with the coaches.

We have a lot of interaction throughout the whole process, so it's fun to kind of like get everybody together in that room and just go through everybody and hearing everybody out and see what the vision is for the coaches for these players.

**Q. There are some teams that are choosing to not meet with as many players and they worry it's biasing them by meeting the person. I'm curious why you choose to spend as much time as you do with the players?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I think that we totally don't know exactly who the person is, so you're trying to spend as

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much time as you possibly can. Even once they're in the building, we think we want to have as great of a feel for them as we possibly can, but we're still learning them and how to help them succeed and reach their true potential.

You know, a lot of people do things differently, and you just have to be pliable and keep learning. Mike is here too, if you guys have any questions for Mike.

**Q. Mike, this is your third go-around now in this predraft process. Where do you feel like you've grown the most now compared to when you were a first-year coach going through this and the way that you guys structure your process?**

MIKE MACDONALD: My appreciation for the amount of work that goes into -- I mean, it's a lot of information being harvested over the course of, you know, years of work, so kind of understanding how our process is now, probably my role in the whole process is probably clear.

You can kind of jump in head-first the first couple of years, but now you can kind of see where my role kind of fits in. So it's just clarity.

I'll tell you what, I really appreciate the amount of work that goes into it. Even our coaches, like, they come in at the 11th hour. I think they have a great understanding of what it takes to generate this information from our scouting department and how great they do, but you know, adding the vision for how we would probably play each player and there's a lot of time where they're spending individually with these guys to really just gain that extra, you know, feeling for who they are, like John is talking about.

Just really appreciate everybody's effort up to this point.

**Q. You were vocal in that process?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Probably less.

**Q. Why?**

MIKE MACDONALD: My job is not to come in with a -- my job is to work with people throughout the process. We've got a really smart people that are really good evaluators, so why not hear them out? Then we can kind of work with what's best for us as, like, each situation starts to unfold.

**Q. John, the changes here I think going from, what is it, ten minutes to eight minutes between picks in the first round, do you see that potentially impacting the team's ability to pull off trades? Does that require you to do anything differently in preparation for the first round?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: No, I think you're usually ahead anyway. You're a couple of picks ahead, and so it's just that time, that extra two minutes is not going to make a difference in terms of trading, moving around, that sort of thing.

You try to line stuff up. Really you try to do it this week, but really people get serious, you know, like Thursday, Thursday morning, just throughout the day, talking on the phone.

You're talk about trading up and trading down, all that? Yeah.

**Q. How do you see that end of the first round pick being one that can be a play for a lot of teams because whether it's the fifth-year option or the last one of the day just in your observations over the year?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Definitely. It's the pick that everybody wants. A, you're blessed enough to win the Super Bowl, right? The fifth-year option right there. It's no secret with us, guys. We have four picks, so we'll be looking to move back. People are usually understanding that I think we tend to trend backwards, trade back. We traded up to Tyler and our punter, Nick, yeah.

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, Nick.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: So we do do that. It's not like we don't do that.

MIKE MACDONALD: All four times.

**Q. Is it the 30s or the combines or --**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Local day.

**Q. Or local day. Can you give an example those that became decisive and you picked a guy based solely on what you learned by digging deeper into those visits?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Oh, man. I think that's a fair question. Like having Frank Clark in here and spending time with him and going through that whole process with him. Obviously was somewhat controversial, but being able to have him in.

You know, Nick Emmanwori last year. What's the vision? What's it going to look like? Every year there is a ton of them, so it's hard to -- but, you know, also, the 30 visits for rookie free agency and the local day for rookie free agency as well.

There's a lot of talented players out there that are not going to get drafted. When you preach, you're talking about a strong 120-person group throughout the whole year, you know, from -- we'll have, what, 120 guys through here every year, so 120 to 90 to our 70, it's getting to know all these guys.

Dave was saying we've had 32 unrestricted guys make our opening day roster since 2010. We've been blessed to be able to work with staffs that are very open to -- you know, it's not where you get acquired or how you start.

It's, like, how you buy into the program and the process and to all the tools that we provide in this building to help you.

**Q. You guys aren't a static, you know, process for your team or scheme or how you do things. You get a player like Nick Emmanwori in the draft; ends up changing what you can do. What's the order of operation? Do you come up with new things that you want, but then help inform who you are looking to pick, or do you then react to who you get and maybe change some of what you're capable of based off of that?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I think we try to be probably more of the former where, you know, you are constantly evaluating where you are as a team, each position group, the things that you're anticipating you're going to be able to have to do from going into next year, where do we need to take our scheme, how do we kind of just level up to the next stage. That's communicated through our process.

So I think our personnel folks do a great job of, like -- I think that communication right now is at a great position of what we're looking for from each position.

Then there's guys that it happens all the time that you're going to get a really talented player that maybe you didn't have initially a great vision for him, and he just can't be denied. That's our job as coaches, to move and shake and make that person's talents come to life.

You also -- you know, there's only so many exceptions you can make, that sort of thing, so it's always moving. I think we tend towards the former.

**Q. John --**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: When there's alignment with the visions is when everything just, you know, comes together.

**Q. I know you guys don't really care about draft grades and what everyone else does out there, but I'm curious from your perspective as a GM, how do you**

**evaluate? What earns your respect that another GM does through the draft process?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I mean, it sounds corny, but it's basically like when you're going through a draft, and the names keep coming off, like, with a specific teams where you are, like, man, you know.

I think I've talked to you before, especially I have with Mike, that it happened with Ozzie all the time in Baltimore and then Eric DeCosta and then there's several others.

Baltimore has always been -- for one or another, has always been a team that the names start coming off, and you are, like, dang, it hurts.

It ends up being the Seahawks draft board and the vision for these players. Not necessarily the National Football League.

There are players that are at a certain level on the board. It might be a little bit lower that, you know, we have -- we still really like, but maybe the vision is not quite as clear as people who are taken higher.

But, man, you respect that, wow, that's a great pick. That's a 6'2" corner running 4.3 and stuff like that.

**Q. How do both of you feel about the running back situation you have right now?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I mean, I think, you know, signing Wilson really helps us in this year's draft as well. Kind of gives us some freedom.

We've talked about George. Charbs is doing great. Yeah, I mean --

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, the guys were back in today, so we got to see everybody. They're all here. On record, I believe in our guys, and there's a process too where, again, we're not going to play for another -- thankfully we don't have to play for another five or so months. We have a lot of training to do.

**Q. How is a guy like Jacardia Wright fitting? He's been around the program. You know him now a little more. How much more can he become a factor?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Like John said, he's a second-year guy, but to me what a great opportunity he has. The great part about our team right now is you can go position by position, and you can rattle off the great competitions that we're going to have really throughout the process.

It's not always that case, so I think that speaks to, like, really the depth of our team right now, which is really exciting. Jacardia is right there.

**Q. How is Kenny McIntosh doing? Where is he at in his recovery?**

MIKE MACDONALD: He's coming along. It's tough to put a timetable to it. He's training his tail off. I think it's one of those deals where, hey, let's just keep hitting those benchmarks until we can evaluate what it's going to look like in the fall.

**Q. Is Kenny here?**

MIKE MACDONALD: He's not here right now, no.

**Q. Mike, you mentioned with the competitions across the roster. John has mentioned from a lesson learned from the last Super Bowl team, wanting to make sure you're drafting guys that are not going to back down from competing against a Super Bowl team, competing against all the young stars that you've got. How do you assess that with the limited time that you have with these prospects, though, leading up to the draft trying to make sure that you're finding the guys that check off that box?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Well, you're working with a personnel department that's been together for a long time. They've got a really clear understanding about what makes a Seahawk a Seahawk. This isn't their first rodeo. That's constantly being discussed from the meetings that I'm in.

Like John said, there's clarity there. There's alignment. Whether we won the Super Bowl or not, it would have been the same criteria, the type of person we're looking for to join our team. It's pretty consistent, honestly.

**Q. You mentioned offseason guys being back in the season starting the offseason program today. How is it kind of getting that process rolling again already?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, it's great. It's great. Today is day one for us and phase one. We talked about this earlier. We tiered our offseason program from having a later finish this season.

But I was blown away by some of the guys that showed up today and that we weren't asking to be here at this point in time. The energy is really great. There's still a sense of urgency and spirit to the guys, which is exciting. It's mostly just strength and conditioning at this point and some individual meetings. This is one of the best times of year to see the guys again after the break.

**Q. Who showed up that surprised you?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I won't say surprise. We said, hey, look, if you finished playing the whole season, you know, phase one we would love for you to be here, obviously but to get more time out of the building so you can come back as fresh as possible. So guys like 'Spoon, J-Reed were here. Guys that didn't -- just wanted to be around the guys again. I thought that was really cool. Derick Hall.

**Q. John, what do you think about the continuity that your scouts have together? How does that impact the mayhem that takes place with free agency after the draft is completed, that Saturday night, Sunday time frame?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, great question. It never goes as smoothly as you want it to go, because guys are, like, I've never been on the floor at the stock -- actually, I have. What am I talking about? We did do that one time. It's crazy like that, right?

Guys commit to you, then they go to a different club, and everybody is negotiating different signing bonuses.

Matt Berry and Joey Lane, those guys do a really good job of just organizing it to say, hey, everybody knows exactly what their role is, whether it's a specific coach and who is negotiating, who is recruiting with that coach.

Then when I was talking about the process of it, I was talking about basically the study of it this year, like the focus of it. What can we really bite into? What are the redeeming qualities here with this player and working with the coaches to have that vision for that player?

**Q. John, you've been open about how you've changed or continually revisited your draft process over the years and maybe you pushed a needle up earlier I think that was an example you gave. When you look at free agency and trade, which of the processes do you feel like changed the most since you became GM?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: The trades on draft weekend. You have to make sure -- you have to call every team and make sure you're on the same page to figure out -- we all used to use the Jimmy Johnson sheet. It was actually much easier to work off of and negotiate with other teams.

Now everybody has different -- we've added a lot more analytics groups to it, so it's built off of analytics, says salary cap, previous history with trades. Because at the end of the day, if you want the player, you're going to get the player. We all used to be a little bit more disciplined in

terms of sticking with the same point system, because can you get in situations now where you are, like, you don't want to come off as rude, but you're like, why would I do that? We're getting our butt kicked.

Unless there was a 6'5", 330 pound defensive tackle running 4.3. Then maybe you would get your butt kicked and just go get him.

**Q. Considering where you are picking my guess is there aren't as many fans that are into this draft as maybe they were in '23 when you had all those picks. How important is it to really nail these picks in the draft and to keep the success going?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, that's a great question. I think either at the combine or maybe at the owner's meeting I think there's a lack of depth in this draft. I thought our scouts did a great job in the fall of identifying that and that loud us to be a little bit more willing to give up the fourth and the fifth round draft pick.

No matter what draft you're in what year, it's our responsibility in the organization to be able to find true Seahawks all the way through it. So that means if we did have that fourth, fifth, and we're moving around and we acquire more draft picks, we're still going to be focused on making those guys true Seahawks.

You know, when you say nailing it, no matter if you have the three and -- was that '21? Was that the year we had three picks?

Yeah.

Or, you know, last year having a bunch of draft picks, it doesn't matter. You still feel that same level of pressure to be able to bring the best people you can and for the organization and for the coaching staff.

**Q. John, the perceived abnormalities in this draft that you were just talking about, the lack of depth, there's some possessions that seems like in years that are easier to find. Maybe not this year. What do you make of that? Do you think that's still, like, maybe the final effect of the COVID year, NIL? What do you make of that?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: There's a couple of guys in here who -- this is supposed to be the last year of it, but there's still a couple of guys in there that are going to be finishing their first contract at 29 years old.

Yeah, it's my understanding this is going to be the last. It should be the last year of it. They're trickling down pretty

quick. We got some guys that have been in school for six years, you know, so...

They're called doctors.

**Q. John, when you say your board is for your guys, not the National Football League. In terms of yours, are you saying it's suggested for your needs?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Combination, yeah. It's adjusted for comparing somebody to -- comparing a corner to 'Spoon or Josh Jobe. How are they going to compete with those guys? What's the fit?

Then obviously, you know, need. If you are doing it correctly, need just should pop in there naturally.

**Q. More so roster makeup than need.**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Uh-huh.

**Q. When you look back to the drafts coming out of the last Super Bowl in 2013 and what you kind of went through, what did you learn about trying to maintain the drafts you made then, things you went through at the time, and how do you try to adjust that now and try to do it this time around to stay where or at?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, well, getting to the point earlier here about finding those players that are going -- that want to come in and compete at a high level and not be enamored by the guys they just saw playing in the Super Bowl, or whether they played them on Madden at four years earlier or something like that.

But, also, not necessarily just, like -- just kind of throwing darts a little bit. Like, hey, we might as well take a shot at a guy that looks like Richard Sherman or runs like Earl Thomas, you know, or we think could be the next Kam Chancellor or something like that.

We're really, really careful about comparisons. That never goes real well.

I understand the entertainment of it, and I find myself doing it once in a while too. Like, oh, this guy reminds me of this player from the past or -- I'm starting to get to the point now where these guys are looking at me like, who is that? You know?

Leslie and I are the only ones who know who these guys -- Todd Brunner too. Todd played with a leather helmet and strap, so...

**Q. When both of you are digging into intangibles and**

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**trying to add to the culture here, what value do you place on the relatively few collegiates who stay at one school their entire college career? Is that a gold star on your board?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: From a loyalty standpoint, absolutely. There are some guys who turned down a lot of money to leave.

MIKE MACDONALD: It's hard to put it in a hard and steadfast case because there's different reasons for guys transferring. You don't want to just discount them for that, but that's definitely something that it opens your -- now that's the abnormality rather than the rule.

**Q. John, you talk about how draft day you want things calm, figured out, harmonious in the draft room. What parts earlier in the draft process are there disharmony or real active debates about what to do? At what point does that come up? What are those normally about? Is it about players or position? How do those work?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: You mean the knock-down, drag-outs?

**Q. Yeah, when there's not agreement. Before you've reached that point of consensus and alignment, what are the points in the process where --**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah, we'll have a reset. Hey, if we're seeing it differently, then a specific scout or, you know, a position coach, we'll have a reset. Like, hey, let's just take a deep breath, sit down, start from scratch, kind of re-present the player to the coach or the scout or whatever, and just start that.

Just have those direct lines of communication where it's not, like, you know, this scout doesn't know what he's doing or that coach can't evaluate.

We don't have a lot of that. I think we don't have a lot of that because we have -- we're meeting on the weekends. We're kind of going through it a lot. There's a lot of these perceived arguments that are set up with the last, what, I don't know, three months. You know, just constantly talking about things.

Then we'll have, like -- every year you're going to have some guys at certain positions that we're just off on a little bit. We just continue the communication until we narrow that gap.

**Q. Back to the trade conversation. Maybe this isn't a thing at all, but did you get the sense a decade ago after you guys won the Super Bowl, or have you**

**sensed it with other teams coming off Super Bowl wins, that other teams may not want to trade with that team out of a sense of, well, why would we help the defending champions get any better?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: No, no. Everybody has their own plan, and I don't think teams are concerned about whether they're going to help another team or not help a team. We've talked within our division. That was kind of frowned upon for a while. You don't trade within your division. Everybody in our division we would trade with. We have good relationships with all three of those teams.

You're maneuvering around the board to try to help your team no matter what, and so when you look at it through that lens, then you're basically just not concerned about -- what does happen after is, like, when you get through the draft, you kind of sit down and look at specific teams and be, like, oh, you got to be kidding me. They got that guy, that guy, that guy, that guy? Because when you are in it, you're just constantly moving and shaking and strategizing and communicating with each other.

When you take a step back afterwards and grab a beer and look at the -- or a Coke, maybe a Pepsi or something -- you're just looking at the draft and you are looking at those teams, especially like in your division. You're kind of like, eh, that's when you get...

**Q. Have you been frustrated with a team in the division if you thought they were going to take your quarterback?**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: Yeah.

**Q. Mike, you've now been through a couple of -- you've been through a --**

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I see what you're doing there. He's, like, all jacked up. Yeah, got him. Professor Plum over there.

MIKE MACDONALD: The original was more of a tan question. If there's a leader, got to stop trading with them.

**Q. Having been through a couple of drafts together, what stands out watching all the personnel guys operate through the actual draft, the maneuvering and the trades, everything going on?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, it's awesome. I think the great thing about the way we do it here is it's the way that we do it here. It's the way that I know that John believes in, and it's our style. I think that's what gets the best out of everybody. Everybody is clicking. You know, they're all --

they all have their roles and the whole process and the whole cog from my perspective. John does a great job of just kind of coordinating, orchestrating the whole thing.

Yeah, it's exciting. It's a great room to be in. Music choices, sometimes they hit, sometimes we have to change it up.

**Q. What would you change?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Don't ask me. I'm not the music guy.

JOHN SCHNEIDER: I think we should have Cally (ph) do it.

MIKE MACDONALD: Thursdays would be like classic rock Thursdays, but we ended up doing it in season, so we'll see.

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