

# New England Patriots Media Conference

Foxborough, Massachusetts, USA

## Matt Groh

### Draft Media Conference

April 30, 2022



MATT GROH: I want to apologize for keeping you all waiting. Sorry about that. I know you guys got deadlines and lives to get to, a lot more important things going on here on a Saturday night. I apologize for the delay.

Really excited to add these seven young men to the team today and just continuing to try and add pieces to get better.

I'll generally just leave it to you guys wherever we're starting.

#### **Q. Wanted to ask you, what initially drew you to Bailey Zappe, and what qualities did you like in him?**

MATT GROH: Yeah, you put on the film of Bailey Zappe and it's hard not to like him. It's a lot of completions, it's a lot of touchdown passes, and it's a lot of wins.

This guy is a winner, the way he's able to lead and command his team. He's got a lot of great traits that you want in a quarterback. Most importantly, success, with the way he's able to produce on the field and do what's right for the team and get the ball to the playmakers, which he was fortunate enough to have at Houston Baptist and at Western Kentucky.

Coach Helton gave him a lot of responsibility, and he really did a great job for his teams.

#### **Q. Before the draft you said you were looking to get faster everywhere. Do you feel like you accomplished that this weekend?**

MATT GROH: Yeah, I mean, you look at a couple of the guys we added yesterday, a couple of the guys we added today, there's some pretty fast times. I'm sure you guys know them, looked them up. At certain positions, there's only so many ways to handle speed, and these guys wake up every morning and they're fast. It's a great gift I was never fortunate enough to have. But we're going to try and put them in the best position to use that speed and open things up for us.

**Q. Question about kind of the makeup of the class as a whole, a lot of small school guys, a lot of guys from non-traditional programs in terms of the Patriots and their draft history. I'm curious how that reflects on your scouting collaborative. Last night you said "collaborative" is the word, and to be able to have a good read and evaluation of these particular prospects, how this draft reflects on that effort, as well. What was the role of some of the secondary All-Star games? Some of the guys referred to East-West Shrine game, Hula Bowl, as well as the Senior Bowl.**

MATT GROH: Those games are a great opportunity to see some of these smaller school players go against what might be considered higher level competition.

But some of these guys at the FCS program or whatnot, they play some of the FBS schools, and these FCS programs, a lot of them aren't far behind from some of these FBS programs, to be quite frank.

There's players everywhere, and it's our job to go find them. Our area scouts and our national scouts and Cam Williams does a great job getting those guys organized.

We've got to cover every school and be on top of wherever there's a player. We're going to go find them and we're going to get to know them, and we've got to see how they would fit into our program and then what skills they have.

It's not just the Alabamas and LSUs. We're happy to have a player from LSU and Arizona State and some of these big-name programs, but it ultimately comes down to the kid and the skill set and how they're going to fit in, into our culture and into our scheme.

#### **Q. I wanted to go back to Zappe for a second. I know this is something the Patriots have done for a while even in Tom's early years, but what's the benefit of drafting a quarterback when you have a young starter who is still young and kind of early in his rookie contract and all of that?**

MATT GROH: Yeah, there's always value in having good players on your team, and Bailey is a good player and he's going to add value to our team. It's going to be up to him



to kind of carve out what role that is here initially and then going forward.

I think it might have been Mike last night asked a question about value, and there's -- whatever it is at that quarterback position, yeah, one guy is only on the field, but you'd better have another good one or two or three or whoever it is in the system coming up, because you never know when those guys are going to be needed, and if you're short at that position, you're going to be in real trouble.

Just like a college program that might bring in a highly recruited quarterback one year, you can't really afford to skip a year. You've got to have plenty of talent there at that position, and we had an opportunity to add Bailey and tried to add some good value to the quarterback position.

**Q. Pretty simple question that I'm sure is going to have a complicated answer, but I'm just curious, we've seen -- from where the team was last year we saw a lot of departures or unsigned guys this year. You obviously traded for Devonta; made other moves; now you have the draft. I'm curious from your perspective as the director of player personnel, do you feel like the team is better right now than the one that finished last year, and why do you feel that way?**

MATT GROH: Yeah, that certainly is a complicated question. Appreciate the question. Yeah, that is a complicated question, and that's a question that once we put together the team and can actually see the team together; we're just in phase 1 here getting ready to start phase 2 and actually put the team together.

Look, we're still putting the team together. We're still working through college free agents. We've been able to add some good undrafted college free agents here through the years, and we're working through that process right now.

So to take the easy way out, that answer is yet to reveal itself. We'll keep working. We are going to continue to try and find ways to make this team better, so I think it would be very early to compare this team that is a work in progress to last year's team that played 17 regular season games and was fortunate enough and earned their way into the playoffs.

**Q. I respect the answer and I understand your answer, but you and Bill sit there, you look at your depth chart, you look at last year, you look at where we were weak, you try to make adjustments this year. I've got to think that you guys feel pretty good about where this team is heading into obviously the on-field portion.**

MATT GROH: Yeah, I heard a lot of things about where we were last year as a team. We try and ignore the noise around here. I'm sure you guys have seen the sign. It's just the team is still such a work in progress right now that it is really difficult.

We've had some needs. We've tried to address those needs. We've tried to get better. But there's not a person who's answering these questions for any team around the league that's not saying the same thing.

So I appreciate the question. It's just a little difficult to answer right now.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Jack Jones. With a player who's had some off-the-field issues in the past, how hard does your staff work to figure out is this guy a fit and has he put that stuff behind him, and in the end why did you feel comfortable drafting Jack in the fourth round?**

MATT GROH: The first part of that question, how hard did we work? Real hard. Really, really hard. It's not just the last month or so. It's a continual process.

I feel like I've been watching Jack Jones for a while now, following his career. That's what happens with some of these highly touted recruits.

We've spent a lot of time with Jack to try and get comfortable and understand the different situations that he's felt, and feel good about kind of getting to know him and understanding those situations to have a process in place to be able to add him to our program.

**Q. Overall how would you describe the class that you've put together? Secondly, we talked a lot about speed, but what were some of those other needs that you as a collective wanted to address with this draft?**

MATT GROH: Yeah, I touched on some of that last night. We're always looking to be tougher. We're always looking to add talent. Lots of times you've got a talented guy who's not very tough and the coach says, oh, we've got to get tougher, we've got to get tougher, but they keep playing the talented guy.

A wise man once told me, you want to have a tough team, you'd better have tough players. We're always looking to add tough players and speed. To be able to add some speed there to the perimeter and some athleticism inside, I mean, who's not looking for those things.

**Q. I know you talked before the draft about hoping that**



**those early-round picks can kind of turn into immediate contributors. I'm curious where you see the most potential for immediate impact from this draft class.**

MATT GROH: Yeah, these rookies, they're immediate impact so many times is going to come on 4th down and in the kicking game. Again, that's a good place to start with speed and toughness.

Coach Achord and Coach Houston, they'll get those guys put in the best position to start finding their way through the NFL as professionals, and so often that happens on special teams.

All the rookies who are coming in, they've got to be prepared to strap it up on 4th down.

**Q. I'm curious on the age factor of some of these guys. I know you mentioned I think it might have been the pre-draft news conference just that there's going to be some older guys with the whole COVID thing and a deeper class. Is there any concern when you guys are looking at some 24-year-olds, multiple, in your draft class? Like do you guys have those discussions and that you want to get the age down?**

MATT GROH: I've noticed you pay a lot of attention to birth dates here, high attention to detail here, and I don't know how you got pushed to the end of the line here this time.

At a certain point, it becomes a factor. Whether a guy is 23, 24 years old, we're talking about a year here. Yeah, it's great he's had that much more time for development, for experience.

I mean, it goes both ways. If you're drafting a bunch of 20- and 21-year-olds, you're going to get questions about maturity and inexperience. If you're drafting 23- and 24-year-olds, it's not really a big gap I'd say.

Once you start getting to some of these older players, it's a factor that you keep in mind, and I think the position plays a factor in that.

But don't really think there's that big of a difference between some of those age groups that we're talking about.

**Q. I wanted to go to the end of the line. I didn't want to always be first. I felt like I came in with a blitz last night so I wanted to come back and play more of a softer zone, see what was in --**

MATT GROH: I just thought it was pre-ordained that you were the first guy.

**Q. No, no, absolutely not. Before you go, just one of the fun parts from a reporter's standpoint is trying to anticipate like your next moves in the draft, right. So you guys are up on the clock and I'm thinking to myself, I wonder if they'll go there, and when you went with Harris at running back, it surprised me because you had the running back in the fourth. Did that surprise you guys? And was that sort of like, hey, that's the best player; we've got to double dip there?**

MATT GROH: Yeah, again, when you have an opportunity to add a really good player to your team, you want to capitalize on that. Kevin under Coach Muschamp, under Coach Beamer, has had a great career down there at South Carolina, and really like the way he plays and the things that he was able to do under those two different systems.

When you see the value in adding a good piece to your team at that position with the way those guys -- you know, how physical this game is, you can never have enough good guys to hand the ball off to. This guy is a really strong runner, so we're happy to add him to the team.

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