

New England Patriots Media Conference

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Matt Groh

Draft Media Conference

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MATT GROH: Appreciate you waiting on me here, finishing up on day three, it's a lot trying to get organized with the potential signings and just kind of getting our bearings after a long day.

You know, market sharing a lot of picks here. Finishing up with the crew that we got running through, all the picks in the fourth round and the sixth round and the different movements.

So able to add a lot of different players at a lot of different positions from a lot of different backgrounds.

So, looking forward to getting everybody here and getting them into our culture. Starting off with Jake today, leading into a couple of those guys in Sidy and Atonio following behind him on the offensive line, good versatility there between the three of them. Jake having played guard and center; you know, Atonio, really being more of a guard, and then stretching out to Sidy playing guard and tackle in his career.

So three good guys to bring a real hard-nosed attitude here to the offensive line. In the middle there to at Chad Ryland, the kicker from Maryland, also one of Sid he's teammates at Eastern Michigan over the last few years, you know, to add him and then add a little bit of play making there on the outside between the two wide receivers with Boutte and Douglas, those two guys kind of complement each other as well.

Boutte has played inside. He's played outside. Douglas has done a little bit of the same and then in between them, another specialist with Bryce Baringer. So to be able to add two of the very top players at their positions in Chad and Bryce to the team, certainly was an opportunity that we didn't want to pass up on.

Then finishing up there with the aptly named Ameer Speed and Isaiah Bolden. So two guys who bring a little bit of position versatility from their backgrounds defensively in the secondary and then also on fourth down.

So kind of a diverse group there from the big guys with the beef up the middle to the speed quite literally with these defensive backs and wide receivers.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Kayshon. A while ago, he seemed like the next great LSU receiver after a phenomenal freshman year. How much potential do you see with this pick and what does the team have to do and what does Kayshon have to do to realize that potential that a lot of people saw a few years ago?

MATT GROH: Just got off the phone with some of these undrafted guys who we are looking to sign and had the message for them and that really goes for everybody.

Now, the opportunity is yours, and it's up to you to make the most of it. Kayshon had an unfortunate injury in 2021 and sometimes it takes a little bit of time to come back from those things and it's really going to be up to him to come in here with the right mindset.

He's got all the potential in the world. If he wants to apply himself and to reach that potential, look, we are going to do everything we can to help him succeed. We're going to give him every resource we can as the saying goes, players are our greatest resource, and you know, we made an investment in Kayshon here in the sixth round, so looking forward to see what he can do with his opportunity.

Q. You touched on it but last year we talked a lot about the speed in that draft class; seemed to target a lot of speed and athleticism this year, too. Just at first look overall, how would you characterize this class and what you're able to do this week in terms of players drafted and maneuvering around the board?

MATT GROH: A lot of movement. Always trying to put ourselves in position to get a player that we want and then try and move kind of like a roadmap from position to position. You know, I would characterize it as very diverse.

Just given from, you know, some of the schools that we're looking at, you know, from Oregon and UCLA out west to Troy and Jackson State a couple maybe not household names in football down in the southeast. A lot of good programs down there. Obviously the national champions with Coach Smart and Georgia.

But there's a lot of good players down there and they can't all go to the SEC. So just trying to find as many good players as we can all across the country, and then we really kind of run the gamut here position-wise, interior, offensive line to tackle to corner to wide receiver.

And then, you know, with a kicker and a punter, it's a pretty diverse group of positions and players from all around the country, big schools, small schools, Pac 12, Big 10.

So we got them covered here.

Q. I know you touched on the versatility of some of these O-linemen off the top, with Sidy specifically, is he somebody that you think could maybe play some tackle for you guys, or are all three of those players more interior linemen?

MATT GROH: These guys will move around. Coach Clem give him opportunities. We'll try and fit him in the best spot possible. Sidy does have some background at left tackle. He's been a guard here the last couple years. He's not a little guy. He's got plenty of athleticism. He's got plenty of power.

So we'll see how it goes and try and find the best spot for him, and the same thing with Jake who has got some versatility playing center and guard, and as another saying goes around here, the more you can do. So looking forward to having those guys and seeing what they can do at multiple spots.

Q. In the pre-draft press conference we were talking about your visit with Onwenu and how he was a different body type than maybe we have been accustomed to with the guards. These two guys look similar, I'm seeing 6-4, 323 for Sidy if I have it right, 6-2, 338 in that range for Atonio. I'm wondering, is this at all, am I overthinking it to -- tied to the quarterback we have? Like we've got to keep this thing, big guys in there, or am I overthinking that? Is there any thought process there with that?

MATT GROH: Atonio certainly bears a resemblance to Mike. Mike is a little bit bigger than Atonio but I can see how you can make that comparison just looking at the two. Atonio has a little bit of a different background and playing on both sides of the ball, so if you really want to get into diversity of some of the players, that's another guy who has done a lot of things for Coach Kelly out at UCLA.

But in the depth of the pocket, I don't think there's a team in the league that's not going to tell you that's not important. That's something that we want to do but you can't just have a bunch of slugs in there. You have to be

able to find some guys who can bend, move laterally, redirect. Look, we are going to face all different sorts of pressure from the interior, but No. 1, if you're getting run through, it's going to be a long day.

I think you can say that just about any team that's trying to put together a big, strong team up front and that's certainly something we want to do along with having right kind of play style. We want these guys to have a real toughness and grit to them, and like I said in the pre draft press conference, that doesn't just come from a magic wand. A lot of these guys have that innate and looking forward to seeing them get after it here.

Q. Isaiah Bolden was talking about having a little bit of pride being the only HBCU player drafted. Just as a personnel director, could you comment on what you're seeing from the HBCUs and just sort of maybe Isaiah himself, too?

MATT GROH: Yeah, Isaiah, coming from maybe the most high-profile HBCU here right now with Coach Bryant, spending his time down there.

Again, Isaiah, a Florida kid, went to Florida State. Ended up at Jackson State. So this is a kid who -- a southeast kid growing up down in Florida. Football is in a lot of those guys' in veins. Was able to spend some time with Isaiah here in the pre-Draft process, and certainly looking forward to getting to know him better and congratulate him on representing the HBCU. I think that's a great thing.

Q. We spoke to you last year and I know it was noted in the pre-Draft press conference, emphasizing speed over something you wanted to get faster last year and entering this draft, do you feel like you went in with any specific goal similar to last year and did you accomplish that?

MATT GROH: Yeah, seems to be my most well-used quote, is if you want speed, draft fast guys. I thought we would just hammer that home here with Ameer Speed. So you guys can keep having fun with that one.

But you want fast guys? You better draft them. So with Isaiah, with Amir, a bunch of these guys, even the guys we took in the earlier rounds, our strength staff does a great job and is going to try and get everything out of these guys.

But you've got to have just naturally fast guys and that's what a lot of these players are and we are always looking to upgrade our team across the board with all their skillsets. But the leg is only getting faster and faster. We don't want to just try and keep up; we want to push the pace here.

Q. And a quick follow-up just to stick with that Onwenu theme, does the team still envision him starting at right guard, considering a lot of the O-linemen you drafted today or on the interior?

MATT GROH: Yeah, a great thing about Mike is he came in here, did he what was asked about him but he's really kind of settled in at guard. Like I talked about, you can say we drafted three guards.

Well, you know, Jake's got a lot of experience at center, and Sidy has some experience at tackle and you know one thing you look at, a lot of got teams that we've had around here and certainly if you look at those two teams who are playing on the final weekend this year, you can't have enough good offensive lineman.

So it's just something that you can never have enough of and if you don't have enough, it's going to be really hard on you. So looking forward to getting these guys in the mix and they are just going to have to come in here and compete with the rest of the crew, Mike and David and Cole and all the other guys in the tackle position as well.

Q. I jumped on a little late so apologies if you already addressed this but to further the offensive line discussion, you know, you guys added a bunk of guys who have versatility but you didn't add anybody who has quote unquote tackle traits. Is that -- did it just not present itself, that opportunity? Do you really like what you have in Reiff and Anderson and you've got Stueber coming back who we didn't see a lot of. Can you just address where you guys think you are right now at tackle?

MATT GROH: Right. So signed three guys in free agency at the position. You know, re-signed Connor. Re-signed -- or signed Calvin Anderson, kind of re-signed him since we had him for a short spell here before but signed Calvin Anderson and then with Riley.

So we got a lot of bodies there right now. Again, wouldn't really want to take any of the guys that we got. You know, do I want to take Christian Gonzales off this team and add a tackle? You know, those are the decisions you've got to make. So you know, we could have drafted tackle in the first round and I'm sure the question would be: Well, did you address corner.

So there's only so many picks and certainly only so many picks up front, so I think we definitely got a lot of good guys there to work with. Again, you mentioned Andrew Stueber, drafted him last year. He's kind of new to the mix so again I don't want to say he's an extra draft pick but he's kind of

an unknown just like some of these draft picks are coming in.

So we do our research, we know who the player is in college but it's a whole new game here now. We'll see what all our guys do to mix in with the free agent crowd and we do have some good slid depth there and we'll just see, let these guys go in and compete just like at any other position. These guys are going to have to come in and compete and earn that time.

Q. With respect to the tight end position, you don't have anyone under contract ^ past this upcoming season. Didn't draft one here today. What's thought process at that position?

MATT GROH: Thought process was those guys went really fast and they just kept coming off. You know, so that was just the way the Draft unfolded. There were some guys up top. There were some good depth in the middle of the Draft and those players came off really, really fast, I don't know all the history of the position in the drafts. You know, but sometimes a guy goes just like I mentioned before, a guy goes and then it's like an avalanche and that position just kind of keeps falling and falling and falling and so you've got to still trust your board and you want to not just draft a guy to say, hey, we drafted a tight end.

Well, if he's not the right fit, if he's not what you're looking for, then you don't want to waste a draft just to say, okay, well, now we feel good we drafted a tight end. We had a couple guys that we really liked. They just went and that's just kind of the way it's going to go at any position in the draft. Just got to kind of take them as they come.

Q. It seemed like there were a couple guys that fell at least in the late third round or maybe early fourth, is there an instance where sometimes a medical comes up and you might like the player but it's just too much of a risk from that standpoint?

MATT GROH: Yeah, again, it's always the fit that we are looking for with the player. So you know, sometimes it's medical, sometimes it's character, sometimes it's scheme. You know, we are trying to put all that together and come to really an ultimate comfort level and consensus on how the player is going to be used in our offense. We had some guys that liked that just didn't fall for us to be able to get one of those guys.

Q. Couple Shrine Bowl alums in Demario and Atonio. How big of a role did that time play in your evaluation and decision to select them, and specifically on Demario, what intrigues you about him as a prospect?

MATT GROH: So going into the Shrine Bowl, two guys that we identified that we certainly would like to work with and then you just get that comfort level and you really get to know the player as a person and as a player, what they can do.

And being able to work Troy and the rest of the staff out in Vegas, and then Troy in particular, you know, with his prolific career as a punt returner, being able to work with Demario and all those guys and Troy and Ross as wide receivers, being able to work with those guys, and then the offensive staff and kind of really being able to work with Antonio, we definitely like those guys going into the game. We are really happy they are on our team. And so that just kind of further solidified our feelings on the players after spending a week with them.

Q. Curious about the trade with the Jets and just, I know we've seen is it before, but where it's a division rival, is that an awkward call for your guys or how does that work, and just the trades in general, just three, I think, for the Patriots, which I would say most people would say, was expecting more, given how many picks you went in with. Was it just sort of quiet this year in terms of the market overall?

MATT GROH: Pat Stewart did a great job again, working the phones with the Jets, and you know, we have got good relationships with the dress. Joe Douglas does a great job. Rex Hogan, those guys. We are competitors, certainly on the field, but you get to know a lot of these guys when you're working with them, like pat was able to do with Joe in the past or when you're on the road as an area scout, sometimes those other area scouts in your area from other teams, they are as much your coworkers as the people who are wearing the same logo as you are.

We all have relationships throughout the league, and those relationships help when it comes to drafting and trades. Look, Pat and Eliot Wolf and Cam Williams, those guys, myself, but principally those three guys, especially Pat and Eliot, really, really worked the lines hard, and constantly making calls and the amount of offers that get made, either to us or to other teams, you know, pales in comparison to the actual amount of trades that get done.

So you know, that's just, again, kind of how the Draft ball -- draft board falls at a certain position. You know, it takes two to tango, and look, those other teams that are trying to get in as well, and if you don't have the best offer, then you know, obviously you're going to lose out on that spot or you're not going to be able to move back or move up.

But I would say those guys really, really worked the lines hard. There's certainly spots where we were trying to

move up and it didn't work out, and am able to rest real easy knowing, hey, we did everything we could to try and get up and get that player or I'm really glad we had patience in that situation and let things come to us. It's a delicate balancing act trying to put yourself in position for a player.

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