

New York Giants Media Conference

Thursday, April 28, 2022

New York, New York, USA

Joe Schoen

Brian Daboll

Draft Press Conference



JOE SCHOEN: First start off, we're ecstatic with the two players we got, obviously getting Kayvon Thibodeaux, really good pass rusher at five, we are excited about that. Thought of getting him there with Azeem on the other side and the pass rush is important to us, so two young pass rushers on the team now that we are definitely excited about.

Then Evan Neal, again, I'm sure he'll be coming up, but starting off we'll be putting him at right tackle. Obviously we really like his versatility, 40 career starts in three different spots in the SEC, only missed one game in his career with COVID. So both 21 years old, young players, both still have upside to develop.

But, you know, worked out great. We are happy with both of the players that we were able to procure tonight.

So open up for questions.

Q. Joe, what was it like sitting at five, three tackles, you obviously love Kayvon, how much decision-making, not just the players but the orders?

JOE SCHOEN: We have been through these scenarios a million times. We had seven or eight cards, and we just kept switching them back and forth based on different scenarios, and this is a scenario we went over. And if there were tackles on board and a pass rusher, we were going pass rusher knowing we could get a tackle at 7. We were ecstatic when that scenario came up.

Q. Did you say Neal would be starting at right tackle?

JOE SCHOEN: I'm not saying starting. Yeah, we are going to -- we are going to work him at right tackle yes, knowing he has versatility to play left or play guard, which was attractive to us.

Q. Kayvon at the Combine said you gave him a hard

time in interviews to see if he could handle it. What has been your impression of him?

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, we spent a lot of time with him. We met with him at the Combine, I flew out there for his pro day along with a couple other individuals, and we had him in here for a visit.

He's a very outgoing individual. He's got a lot of personality. I'm sure you guys will enjoy your time with him meeting him, but a really good kid, likable kid, works hard.

We had a good -- Brian and I had conversations with several of his coaches the last couple of days. We FaceTimed him last weekend and we got to know the kid maybe more than any player in this draft. Liked the personality and liked the player.

Q. Wanting to see the personality, knowing he was going to be right for you?

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, and it worked out, too, that I was able to get to his pro day and go to dinner. You can only do with so many players, he was one of the players I was able to go to dinner with at a pro day, have him here plus at a Combine. There's not a lot of players -- there's a lot of players and only so much amount of time.

Evan Neal is the same way. Had dinner with him here. I wasn't able to go to pro day because of the owners meetings, but we had him in the room at the Combine too. A lot of good interactions with both prospects.

Q. The physical traits that stood out to you about Kayvon and about Evan, what stood out?

BRIAN DABOLL: They both have good size, good length. Kayvon is quick off the ball. I think he has a wide variety of pass rush moves, but he can also set an edge for us on our defense, and you know, it's no secret we play multiple schemes with Wink as our defensive coordinator, and we envision Kayvon being able to do a lot of different things for us. He's going to have to come in here and earn it, but a productive player the time he's been at Oregon.



Evan has played multiple positions. He's long -- it takes a guy a long route to go to the quarterback. He's got long arms. He's a big, massive man, played multiple positions, had a lot of people down at Alabama that I trust and had a lot confidence in him and had a lot of good things to say about him and along with Bobby Johnson and Tony Sparano, the guys that have looked at him, we thought very highly of him.

Again, this situation that came up, Joe and I, we've been meeting the last three or four nights going through as many different scenarios as we can. He carries these magnets in his pockets and pulls them out. He had them in the draft room and moving them around all that, and we did as many different scenarios as we could. I thought we were well-prepared for tonight, and when it fell the way it fell, we already had that in the plan.

Q. Brian, people think that the Giants stepped into pretty much the best-case scenario. How would you describe how the Draft went?

BRIAN DABOLL: I credit Joe and his staff along with the coaches, everyone putting so much time and effort. Even till last week, we were patching some guys in my office, Joe and myself and about eight other people, seemed like 12 hours a day we just watched three guys.

We're excited about what we have. Again, a lot of work to do with these guys. There always is when you draft young guys and come into your program, but certainly excited with their talent but also the type of people that they are.

Q. Joe, how many conversations did you have today about possibly making a trade back, and at what point did you realize you weren't going to do that?

JOE SCHOEN: We had probably three teams that had talked about potentially moving up, and it was more to seven -- there weren't a lot of calls -- actually, there weren't any calls on anybody coming up to five. We had some conversations in a scenario where it was really six guys we coveted, and if one of them weren't there, if all six went, then we would have probably considered moving back. But any scenario where two of the six guys we liked were there, we were going to stay. That would have been really the only chance we would have moved back in that scenario.

Q. In general, were teams low balling and reluctant to pay too much to move up just in this draft just in general talking to people?

JOE SCHOEN: I wouldn't say that. You know, the two trades I had in place, it was like, hey let's prepare, if we're

on the clock, it's already done, no haggling. With the two teams I talked to, it was fair. We both agreed it was fair. One of the teams actually called me and said, hey, we are out because a certain position was depleted that they were going to come up for.

We also had a contingency plan if our six guys that we liked were gone, we had a seventh, and if we had to make a pick and we couldn't move back, we were prepared for that.

Brian is not kidding around. We had every possible scenario based on how the top of the Draft went, and it was a unique draft. Typically you have an idea of who is going to be first and second, and there were rumors of it and rumors of who was going to go third, but you didn't really know. Everybody was kind of speculating on that. So we were prepared for a lot of different scenarios.

Q. What would you say were differentiators for a couple tackles? And also, at some point, a hip injury or something, some people had mentioned that -- did you guys have a look at that, and would that factor in at all?

JOE SCHOEN: What he's talking about, us sitting in an office and watching multiple players, multiple times. And I think if you asked around the league how everybody saw those tackles, you'd get a bunch of different opinions.

We did a lot of work on those guys, but after the pass rusher, after Thibodeaux, there was quite a drop. So we would let the tackle -- we like the tackles very similarly, so we thought it was best to let it play out and get the pass rusher first.

On the medical, a lot of times teams share medical grades, and, you know, I think it was 52 percent of the league, there was only 8 percent that had issues with anything with Evan. And circling up with that, I think that was a rumor that was out there, but the majority of the teams in the league, again, he started 40 career games; he missed one game because of COVID.

Q. Did you have to look into that again?

JOE SCHOEN: Our medical staff did a great job. They were on it. We went through all that I mentioned what some teams had concerns with, and our doctors look at it and they were fine with everything. His play history backs that up.

Q. How does not getting a corner impact James Bradberry?

JOE SCHOEN: That doesn't affect James at all. I've said it all along, there are contingency plans. We still have three picks tomorrow night, a fourth, two fifths and a sixth. There are plenty of picks to be had.

Q. Joe, would you say even though the tackles were very close, would you say Neal was your No. 1 tackle?

JOE SCHOEN: They were very close, yeah. We had them side-by-side.

Q. So why did you pick him?

JOE SCHOEN: Because Ickey was gone at six.

Q. In terms of the tackle --

JOE SCHOEN: We thought there was a drop off in pass rushers, and those two were still there, so it played itself out.

Q. There was a report earlier today that you guys were not going to pick up fifth year on Daniels. Is that true?

JOE SCHOEN: Yes, we exercised Dexter's fifth-year option, and then we did not do Daniels.

Q. How does that affect the Draft? Are you looking for a quarterback now?

JOE SCHOEN: We are always open to all positions, but that doesn't really affect our draft status. We met on it today, and it really doesn't affect what we think about Daniel. We really like Daniel and the work he's been putting in. And we are excited where he is, and we are excited to work with him. It was a decision we thought was best for the New York Giants at this time.

Q. What did Wink say? Have you spoken to him yet?

BRIAN DABOLL: Yeah, he gave me a fish pound back. Yeah, look, the Draft is an inexact deal, and you go through as many scenarios as you can and you prepare yourself. I'm not going to say it's like preparing yourself for a game as a play caller.

We felt very comfortable yesterday. The defensive guys went out and played golf today, and the offensive staff went out and did another thing. We felt comfortable. Credit to Joe and the scouting staff. They put the time in, along with the coaches. It was a team effort. Feel like we have two good players to help us, and now it's going to be their job to come in here, work hard, learn how we do things, and help them develop.

JOE SCHOEN: Can I ask a question? I haven't seen Wink, what is he wearing?

BRIAN DABOLL: Not a hat surprisingly. He's got like a golf shirt on. Business casual for coaches tonight. First time I've seen him in normal clothes since I've been here.

Q. Your first time in the hot seat, what was the experience like for you in the war room?

JOE SCHOEN: Daboll was talking about it before. It was like when you go call a game, you're at ease because you have all your third and five calls, if it's third and then plus, here are my calls, we practiced all week, and we got it.

So when you're up there, you're calling a game. We had been through so many scenarios, the exact scenario that played out, we've been through it probably 15 times this week. We would stay in my office and move stuff around, what do we do here, what do we could here. We had a couple rhymes in place for certain scenarios. It was very seamless. It was easy because where we were at five and seven, it was easy to plan for that and narrow your focus.

Tomorrow and Saturday may be a little bit different. You've got to look at our picks further down in the third round. Tomorrow might be easy for the first pick because we know there's four players that we like, and we are going to get one of those four if we stay where we are.

So overall it was good. Again, preparation, we have been through draft process together, Daboll and I. Staff did a phenomenal job like he said. They were very helpful and put in a lot of time and effort not just watching the film but Zooms. These guys were on Zooms with these prospects for like an hour, and we had a process in place and a test in place at each position that the coaches were given of these kids.

We took that into account when we talked about how they did on the football test they were giving them, how they learn, how they pick up information, how they communicate that information. It was a pretty extensive process, from the medical to the coaches to the psychological on all these guys, and I think our process will lead us to the best decisions ultimately.

Q. Do you think that the offensive line --

JOE SCHOEN: We haven't been in pads yet. I hope so, but again, there's going to be competition across all positions, and I feel like we've upgraded it from where I was here and we have four or five offensive linemen when you got here, and we've added some veteran guys we like, Jamil Douglas, Garcia, Feliciano, Glowinski. We are happy

with those guys, Gono. And then now adding Evan Neal, I think it's an interesting group and there's some interior depth. And Matt Peart, when he comes back, all of a sudden I think we could potentially be operating from a position of strength at that position.

Q. Guys at Alabama help you in the process?

BRIAN DABOLL: No, didn't recruit them, but certainly you have relationships in this business, whether it's from team to team in the NFL or in this case, college teams. Obviously I know a lot of people down there. So they were very helpful. They are big proponents of Evan, rightfully so. He's a good player, but you're also trying to get to know the person and how does he treat the GAs and how is he in the cafeteria and the type of people we want to build our program with, and he fit it to a T. And on top of that, you have to be a good football player and have some talent and love the game and love to compete.

We are happy he's in our program, but now he's got a lot of work to do.

Q. When you were on the clock, was there any conversation in the room about where to go?

BRIAN DABOLL: I'll jump ahead of Joe. I told you he was prepared. There was not a lot of talking at all. It was calm, composed. And I think you can be that way when you're prepared, when you put the time in and you have the conversations before they happen.

Again, I can't tell you how many different scenarios we went through the past week, so we felt, however it was going to unfold, that, you know, we would be ready for whatever decisions we had to make.

Q. Kayvon said on the TV when they were interviewing him on stage that before he got on the plane to go to Vegas, someone from the Giants FaceTimed him. Was it you?

BRIAN DABOLL: Yeah, Joe and I talked to him, again, just to say hello and wish him the best of luck in the draft process. We had good meetings with him. Good player. Just wanted to wish him luck.

Q. Can you talk about work ethic, his motivation, affinity for his brand, was there anything that eased your mind, something that you felt the need to look into or saw anything like that?

BRIAN DABOLL: I think you look into everything, but we sat down with the young man. He came up here on a visit to the Combine. Joe did a Zoom. Did another Zoom with

him. We felt very comfortable with him, his approach, both as a young football player and as a young man.

Q. Do you like coaching guys with big personalities, and how do you handle that?

BRIAN DABOLL: I like coaching good guys. Everybody has a different personality. When you're coaching in the National Football League for 22 years, you come across a lot of different characters, and as long as they love football and they are a pro on and off the field. I have six kids, and they all have different personalities. And that's the job of a coach, too, to learn your players, what makes them tick, how to push them when they need pushed, how to hug them when they need a hug. Felt very comfortable with him.

JOE SCHOEN: And these athletes are changing. The NIL stuff, the kids are making a lot of money in college. Freshmen in college, some are making 100,000, 200,000. It's a different athlete and a different experience as a college football player, and we have to evolve and understand that kids are going to evolve, and what they have been exposed to when they were in college is going to be a little bit different.

Also with Kayvon, he had a serious ankle injury. And a lot of people, with his draft status and draft stock, could have hung it up and said, We'll call it a season and I'm not going to play anymore. He fought back. And we talked to several people at the school, and he worked his way back and practiced, and a lot of people -- he didn't necessarily need to do that.

Q. Of the tackles (indiscernible), how much did that come into play knowing you wanted to put him at right tackle?

JOE SCHOEN: It helps with you're going to draft a player at number 7 and you get to see him do what you're going to ask him to do. That makes you feel good. We definitely went back, we studied his tape from last season when he was at right tackle and even watched some of the stuff at guard. His versatility is important. One guy goes down in a game, it helps the eight guys you take on game day. If a guy can move around like that and help you out, that's an added plus, too.

Q. Joe, you went to dinner with Kayvon.

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, Korean barbecue place. You have to ask him about it.

BRIAN DABOLL: I had never been to a Korean barbecue place before. It was a lot of fun.

Q. We see one side, one personality. Is he the same personality-wise in a different setting with you, or did you see a different side of him that appealed to you?

JOE SCHOEN: One-on-one, when Dabs and I just met with him on his visit, yeah, he's very calm, cool, collect. And when I had one-on-one experiences with him, and when he's out and about in front of you guys, you might see a little bit more personality on him. But all in all a really good kid and got to like him throughout the process.

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