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Joe Schoen

Press Conference

Q. Now that the Vikings are -- you know what they did, right? They're kind of in striking distance, maybe going up to get a quarterback. How much are your eyes on them as a team that could potentially leapfrog you guys?

JOE SCHOEN: That's their prerogative. I don't know what they're doing. We're looking at every scenario. We can go either way. We can go up. We can go back.

It's still March, and there's plenty of time. There's a lot of strategy involved. Frankly, not all the pro days -- not everybody has had their pro days, and there's some kids we've been around more than others. It's a good draft, whether it's -- I think Jim Harbaugh said it today. If quarterbacks go 1 through 4, at 5 they're getting the best non-quarterback position player in the draft, and we're in a good position at 6.

So I think there's going to be a good player there. We'll look at all options, whether it's going up, back, staying. Ultimately I think we'll end up with a good player.

Q. Kind of that mindset if the No. 5 pick is then No. 1, does that change the value and the trade concept, or how did is that work?

JOE SCHOEN: I don't think so, I don't think so. If you are Arizona, you are in good shape at quarterback, and I think the Chargers. They're in good shape.

If some of the teams want to come from wherever or whoever those teams are want to come up there, I think they're in good shape where they could also pick a good player or move back.

Q. Is it your belief that picks 1 through 3 are not up for sale?

JOE SCHOEN: I wouldn't say that. I think everybody -- nobody is slamming the door. Like, everybody is going to listen. I think you guys ask that all the time. If somebody



called on a player or Kadarius Tony, you're going to listen if people call no matter who it is. You're going to listen if people call. It doesn't mean they're shopping.

I think 1 through 3, those teams all traded quarterbacks, and there's a narrative out there that they may take a quarterback, so we'll see.

Q. D.J. still on track for the spring and still feel the same way about that?

JOE SCHOEN: I got an update on Friday. He is running on land now. So he's off the Ultra-G, and he is throwing. Yeah, knock on wood, no setbacks, but he is in there attacking it every day and doing a good job.

Q. Brian had mentioned yesterday or Saturday that there's no guarantees he'll be ready for week one, but based on what you have said that he will be ready for the start of camp, you would think that would mean he would be ready for week one. What are your thoughts on that?

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, I think I said at the combine every patient is different, and you can't really predict if swelling is going to occur or if there's a setback. He's on the right track right now.

Again, we just have to -- it's day-by-day and week-by-week. You just don't know how he's going to react as we ramp it up and he starts to do more. Hopefully there's no setbacks.

Q. One of the phrases we used with quarterbacks in general is conviction, conviction on him. What does that mean to you, that word? How do you get to that point of having a conviction on a player, particularly a quarterback?

JOE SCHOEN: Just in general?

Q. Yeah, as a general manager, as a scout.

JOE SCHOEN: Draft process or -- there's different ways. If it's a draft process, you see these guys play in the fall.



You spend a lot of time with them during this time of the year in terms of being around them, getting to know them. You do a lot of background and research on the players.

Again, you look at the number of if you are specifically talking about the quarterbacks, like the number of guys that go in the first round that hit and the ones that don't. There is a margin for error. You are dealing with humans.

We believe in our draft process in general, not just the quarterback position. We try to eliminate the margin for error the best we can, which ultimately our process will lead us to making good decisions.

Q. It's such an inexact science, but from the time you got into the league until now, how similar is the way quarterbacks are valued or what you are looking for at the position?

JOE SCHOEN: Like when you go back to the Patrick Mahomes draft, it's him and Deshaun Watson and some of the other guys that went in that draft, and even the Andrew Luck draft. Some of the best quarterbacks out of that draft that were still playing were Tannehill was still starting last year, Russell Wilson, Kirk Cousins. Those guys went not one, two like Robert Griffin.

Again, I just think the quarterback position is I would say the most important position. The GM said it yesterday in our meetings. It's the most important position in sports. I wouldn't disagree because of the level of difficulty playing the position.

Yeah, it's very important in the process. Again, it's an inexact science, and you try to do as much homework as you can to, again, eliminate the margin for error and make the best decision.

Q. What do you prioritize in the quarterback? Obviously some people might prioritize movement or accuracy. When you look at a quarterback, what is the one thing that kind of sticks out to you?

JOE SCHOEN: I this I you have to prioritize it all. It's not, okay, if this guy fails at corner, we can move him to nickel or he's at least our third tackle or our third nickel rusher. The margin for error is -- the fail factor is you are either a backup that bounces around or you're out of the league.

It's one thing to do the work in the fall and see a guy play, but I think the other half is equally as important, being around the player. How smart are they? Can they process information? Can they handle the market that we're in? There's a lot of unknowns. How are they going to face adversity? How are they going to react?

It's not just what you see on the film. That's obviously important, but I think the other part is equally as important, specifically at that position.

Q. Is it different as a GM year-to-year? Some of the guys up in the top ten are not looking for quarterbacks. Chargers, we assume are not looking for a quarterback. Is it different when you are in the game and you are like that is a position that you definitely have to look at and will consider? Does it just changing the whole dynamic? You do your stuff the same, but as you say, quarterback is a little different, isn't it?

JOE SCHOEN: I don't think it really changes our process. We're going to look at them every year. We had our quarterback coach work on a lot of guys last year, and I would say -- let's use Jon Runnion as an example. Spent a lot of time with him coming out. At some point they're free agents, or at some point they're available whether it's a trade.

I think it's important you do your due diligence on all the prospects, not just for the draft, but that work can come in handy down the road when these guys become up for free agency or are up for trades.

Q. There is a difference as far as you can take a quarterback if he doesn't play. Any other position you take at No. 6, you assume he is going to play right away. You know what I'm saying? There's a projection versus, okay, he can help us right now.

JOE SCHOEN: I think Anthony Richardson started this year. I think Stroud started. Bryce Young started. I think every situation is different.

Q. You've also said your expectations of Daniel to start if he is healthy.

JOE SCHOEN: Did I say my expectation was to take a quarterback?

Q. No, but you know what I'm saying. There was no my expectation is Daniel will start if he is healthy unless we take a quarterback, right? There was really no unless there, was there, or is there?

JOE SCHOEN: I don't understand what you are asking me.

Q. If you take a quarterback at No. 6, right, the expectation is that he will not have to start the season as the starter.

JOE SCHOEN: I have no idea.

Q. It's different. If you take a receiver, you are expecting him to play major snaps as a rookie.

JOE SCHOEN: There's a lot of unknowns and hypotheticals.

Q. Or a cornerback.

JOE SCHOEN: The year we took Josh Allen. We had people in place, and after the first half we were terrible, and we put Josh in at halftime. He was going to sit. The plan was to let him sit and let him develop.

Do you have an Alex Smith, and it can be Pat Mahomes and play one game his rookie year. He had an ideal situation. That would be perfect, and they turn into Patrick Mahomes.

That would be good. It varies on situations, and it is a big jump from college to the pros. A guy is going to come in and be instant, that's tough to say.

Q. How aware are you in your process now if you have a bunch of teams, whether it's in the top 13, and there's always speculation about who can move up, which ones might be interested in some of the same guys that you might be targeting, whatever position it is? How aware are you with your process, and do you let that factor in sometimes? There's this idea of, oh, teams will put out smoke, just the idea of we're not really interested in this guy, but maybe we'll throw that out there to see how people are reacting? How much of it is a read and react part of the evaluation to everybody else that you are kind of dealing with?

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, the good thing is it's a relationship business. If you have a good relationship with the GMs and you've had conversation with them, you keep open lines of communication. Some of the noise that's out there, we don't even -- I don't know where some of it comes from. It's just all -- a lot of it's not true.

I'm not one to play a lot of games and leak stuff and do all that stuff, so I think that kind of happens on its own, for whatever reason. I think the most important part in this position is having good relationships with the other general managers and open lines of communication. That's what matters.

It's not what's out there or the narrative or what the rumors are. If you are having conversation with other general managers, I think those relationships will come through,

and there will be truth in those conversations.

Q. What noise are you referring to that's wildly inaccurate about the top of the draft there?

JOE SCHOEN: Anything that's out there. There's very few people that know what we're thinking or what direction we're going. Anything that is out there is likely not true.

Q. We haven't talked to you since the Burns trade and contract. You made a huge investment in him money-wise and then the trade at 39. Do you view him as one of the best edge rushers in the league? Because that's kind of what he is paid as. Do you view him as that?

JOE SCHOEN: I view him as a good young player that we're looking forward to getting in. He's been in the building for one day, so we're looking forward to him coming in the offseason program and working hard and doing the best he can to help our defense and help us win games.

Q. When you are deciding whether or not to draft a quarterback, how much do you weigh the rest of the roster and where you guys are in terms of building this? For example, you still think you're kind of earlier on in the building phase. Do you think rookie quarterback '22, '23, okay, I've got him for the next so and so years compared to Daniel, who is not older quarterback, but is on his second contract?

JOE SCHOEN: All of those things come into play when you are trying to figure out what you are going to do. If you had to move up and you were going to give up assets, what would that do to the future build? If you stayed, what does that do with the current roster? If you move back -- we'll take that all into account and do what's best for the team.

Q. Where do you guys feel like you are? I feel like regime comes in, and your three is looked at as a pivotal year. Where do you think you are as far as the plan you came in with and where you are?

JOE SCHOEN: I think we're still progressing. I just looked at this the other day, the 2021 roster when I got here. I went back and looked at that. We're always evaluating ourselves.

The first offseason, what could you do to really improve the roster? We didn't have any money, so it was Tyrod, Jon Feliciano, and Glowinski. As I started going through the decisions we made and where we are salary cap-wise and trying to make sure we're in good health from a salary cap

standpoint building a young foundation. Again, I think it was when I was in Buffalo, we didn't win a playoff game until our fourth year.

It takes time, as much as you want instant gratification, and nobody wants that more than me. I think you have to believe in the principles and in terms of how to build the team, and we're going on our third draft. It takes time.

When I look back at the 2021 roster and where we are now, I just think we're heading in the right direction, and we'll continue to head in the right direction in terms of bringing in our type of players and what we're looking for schematically, what Dabs is looking at for his offense, and we'll keep making progress.

Q. Where do you think you're at with the wide receiver position at this point?

JOE SCHOEN: I like the three young guys that we have. We just signed Isaiah back. We have Gunner. We don't have Saquon any more, but I had that conversation with him. Wan'Dale I think when he was healthy at the end of the year really showed what he could do. Hyatt I thought showed really good flashes this year. Slayton, getting Isaiah back. We have Gunner and signed Isaiah McKenzie.

There's some depth in there, and it's a good receiver draft. We have six picks right now. Again, we can move several different directions and get more picks, less picks.

I know the staff is happy with the three that we have that are starters, and I think they all showed their ability that they can play in this league.

Q. How much do you feel like you need that No. 1 in some way, shape, or form, though?

JOE SCHOEN: Would it be nice? Yeah, it would be nice to have a No. 1 receiver. I think every team would sign up with that, and especially with an offensive head coach. I think all teams would want that.

Q. (Question regarding Darrin Miller)

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, I talked to his agent. Darrin is going to take time and make his decision. He's still undecided.

Q. Do you have any deadline?

JOE SCHOEN: I'm not going to get into the details. I've talked to him. He is undecided.

Q. How do you build around that? You're building a

team with that uncertainty. How do you go about building that?

JOE SCHOEN: We signed two tight ends this offseason that we like. We're excited about those guys. Again, we still have the draft. We don't play until September. You just have to be patient.

There's ways to acquire players throughout the process. We did it with Jason Pinnock. We got him at the final cutdown. There's different times of the year when you can acquire players, and we're going to give Darrin his time and I'm going to keep mine and Darrin's conversations between us, but we're looking forward to the players that are going to be there in April, and we'll keep building.

Q. (Indiscernible) Drew Lock in your quarterback room?

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, I'm glad we got Drew. He has a lot of physical tools. He is a young player. He was brought in as the backup. He was told that. I know Dabs addressed that.

Yeah, he's going to come in and be a backup quarterback, him and Tommy, and when Daniel gets back healthy, support those guys. If for some reason D.J. can't go, those guys will battle it out.

Q. When the Eagles signed Saquon, I'm sure there were a lot of emotions in the building. Now a few weeks after, how do you feel like that result affects your roster-building strategies?

JOE SCHOEN: I wish Saquon nothing but the best. I don't know what that -- you can't keep them all. I don't know how that is a reflection on my roster-building.

Again, I wish him nothing but the best. He did a lot for the franchise. Walter Payton Man of the Year, a lot of production. I enjoyed working with him for two years and everything he did for Dabs and I in that playoff run. I wish him nothing but the best.

Q. You said Jermaine has played right tackle the last two seasons. How do you see this line coming together with him and Evan?

JOE SCHOEN: We'll see. Again, he hasn't even been in the building but for a day, and he's played four spots throughout his career. A good player that's athletic that our offensive line coach has a history working with. Jermaine is one of the guys that works out.

Q. You said after the season that you view him as a



tackle. Is the door open for a move to guard?

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, and we're still getting Evan back healthy. He is rehabbing his foot, and he has been in the building last two months getting healthy. We'll see when he gets back how he is. I know it's a big year three for him, so looking forward to it.

Q. You said, yeah there when he said do you feel like he might play guard.

JOE SCHOEN: He is going to start out at right tackle.

Q. That would mean Jermaine would start out at guard?

JOE SCHOEN: He could start out at guard, yeah. These are good questions for tomorrow morning. The good thing is you can't have enough depth. You saw it last year with the injuries we had, and to have a guy that can play four spots that our offensive line coach is familiar with, that's invaluable.

However it shakes out, we're going to have the best five on the field at the best position, but having a guy with his versatility, I think is very important.

Q. With Evan if you were considering kicking him inside --

JOE SCHOEN: I don't want to get into the hypotheticals. That's not on the -- we're not doing that right now.

Q. Is he on track?

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah. He has been in there working his tail off, yeah.

Q. John mentioned that he agreed that it's been ridiculous what has been going on with your offensive line for a decade now. You've been here for two years. Do you get that sense in the building, and do you get the sense that we need to do this once and for all? You saw what happened early last season with the injuries.

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, I would say '22 obviously won a lot of games, won a playoff game. Last year, again, I think anything that could have went wrong out there went wrong from the opening drive. The season when Andrew does his hamstring and then the next week Bryson gets a concussion and then John Michael has -- I mean, you just go on and on.

We go to Buffalo, and Ezeudu has to kick out the -- does

his toe, and then Pugh straight off the couch. You start going through it. I mean, there was a time there where I think it was Miami where three practice squad guys were playing for us.

Fortunately I've never run into a situation like that before where we've been decimated at the offensive line. You've seen a lot of the signing that is we've had, a lot of guys that have played in the league and have started games and have versatility. That's always going to be a priority. It was a perfect storm last year unfortunately in terms of injuries and then Andrew re-injuring as he was coming back.

Yeah, the offensive line is going to be important. Is it starts there. I truly believe that. We have to be better up front.

Q. You mentioned the offensive line guys you brought in your first year and how strapped you were. Do you see a difference in the commitment you've made this year in free agency to those guys? Not necessarily comparing the players, but what you were looking for, what you were able to commit to, and is it more of a solution long-term for this offensive line this year as opposed to your first year?

JOE SCHOEN: Yeah, we had a little bit more flexibility to stretch out of the price range we were in the first year. Feliciano I think was \$2 million or \$3 million, and Glow was 5-ish. We were able to stretch into a different area of player.

It gives you the flexibility to make a Burns trade or extend Andrew or Dexter. You just have more flexibility to do that stuff. It allowed us to add more options into the bucket.

Q. When you look at receivers in the draft and the speed in particular, there's the gauntlet trail and the game tape. How do you balance what those things say about their speed at the NFL level, and has that change at all in your time in the league?

JOE SCHOEN: It starts in the fall with the film. Their play speed. We have GPS data we can utilize too that maybe they do not look like they're moving fast, but they're bigger versus a 5'9", 180-pound guy. There are different shapes and sizes, and there's different data points we can use. Then you have the trained eye over years of scouting, the live looks that you can see and get a good feel.

These pro days are important when you can get right up on a player and see how they move. Yeah, there's several different ways that we look at the speed of the players. Then you go to the production. There's some good players that aren't fast that are productive receivers.

Q. When it comes to possibly trading at the top of the draft, are you still of the mind of you would like to get all the hay in the barn and get closer to the draft in your scouting and evaluation process is done before taking action?

JOE SCHOEN: That's a good question, Pat. If you are going to go up for that position in particular, you need to be around them. You're dealing with outside factors in terms of when you can get around the kids and when their schedules and they're all over the place.

I think a lot of the teams are going through, especially in the top three, a process of getting around these kids. LSU hadn't had a pro day. Washington hadn't had a pro day yet. North Carolina hadn't had a pro day.

When Carolina did it last year, I think that was pretty unique. They did it early. I think it was March 10th. I think that's a unique situation. When I was with Buffalo, the Jets did it around this time. Maybe early next week. I can't remember exactly.

Yeah, the timing of it I think if anything is going to happen up there, that will start happening probably over the next couple of weeks, but I think closer to the draft, again, that's probably when something will definitely happen, if those teams are going to move.

Q. On Saquon, you ultimately let him walk, right? You didn't make an off this offseason. Why didn't you trade him then during the season? What's the thought process behind that?

JOE SCHOEN: He was one of our better offensive players, and we weren't giving up. We still wanted him to go out there and perform for us. I mean, we strung together some games together with Tommy, and Daniel was coming back.

Again, I think we all wish things would have went better early in the season when Daniel was healthy. When he was coming back from the neck injury, we wanted to make sure they could go out there and operate. I think Saquon was a big part of that at that time.

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