

Jacksonville Jaguars

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Trent Baalke

Doug Pederson

NFL Draft



Q. Gentlemen, if you guys could just each talk about Travon's skill set, what intrigues you about it and how you think you'll best be able to use him in the defense.

TRENT BAALKE: Well, there's a lot to like in terms of his skill set. He played all the way up and down the line of scrimmage, anywhere from a zero technique all the way to a seven technique. Played in the two point off the edge, which he's going to be used a lot in our scheme. That versatility, ability to stop the run, rush the passer, there's a lot of work to do, but there's a lot of talent to work with.

DOUG PEDERSON: Yeah, really just to echo Trent's remarks, too, just his athleticism, his length, his ability to bend the corner. The thing that you see with this guy is his versatility. He played all up and down the defensive line at Georgia. Just a tremendous kid. He's going to be great for the locker room.

Really, I think, for us, too, just getting him in here, getting him going as soon as we can, and I think getting him in one position and letting him really get good at one position, and that's where we feel he's really going to make the most impact for us.

Q. For both of you, there was a lot of pre-draft speculation that you, Trent, favored Travon and that you, Doug, favored the offensive lineman Ekwonu. Could you talk about how you arrived at this decision? Did you actually have some disagreement with that?

DOUG PEDERSON: Can I just stop you? This thing was never split.

Q. I'm not saying it was, I'm just saying that --

DOUG PEDERSON: I know it's out there and I just want to go on the record and say it was never that way. I don't know where that came from. That's one of the things that I've loved about our process is the communication and us

being on the same page. These sort of unnamed sources, so to speak, I don't get into a lot of that.

A lot of work went into making this selection tonight, and we're just fired up to have Travon in the building.

Q. That said, could you answer the original question about, you obviously collaborated on it, but was there consensus from the get-go about Travon or was that something you had to arrive at after a while?

TRENT BAALKE: Well, I think Doug did a great job of just telling -- there was never a non-consensus. There was a lot of collaboration through this process. We never had that debate. What we did is take a look at each prospect, how they fit, how they fit our system, how they fit the organization, the culture, and we worked from there. We took them all independently and we worked through them.

We just felt at the end of the day this was the best pick for this organization at this time.

Q. Trent, Doug, there seems to be this perception from a lot of fans that Walker just popped on at the combine and that's when teams really started to fall in love with him. Can you talk about -- I know you've been doing homework on guys all season long or end of last season, when you first saw Walker prior to the combine and started to say, okay, this might be a guy?

TRENT BAALKE: Well, the first time that I saw him personally was early October, and from that moment on I felt he added a lot of talent. Obviously you don't make the decision the middle of October or early October; it's a process. But he checked the boxes as we went through the process.

We've got a great chance to look at him through the season. They played an extended season into the National Championship game, and they obviously won that. Then he goes to the combine. He went to his pro day and he did all the drills, both linebacker and defensive line. So we got a great chance to spend a lot of time with him. He was one of the guys we visited with at the combine. He came in for one of the 30 visits and I believe we sent five or

six coaches to the pro day in Georgia. We had a lot of front-and-center action with him, a lot of opportunity to get to know him, to spend time with him as an individual, and again, he checked all the boxes throughout the entire process.

Q. Doug, from a coach's perspective when you see a guy with the athletic ability like Walker, does that get your wheels turning of ways you can use him?

DOUG PEDERSON: Of course. With the versatility that he has and the length that he has, he's a humble guy that just wants to work and improve, it's exciting to be able to see where he can help us. He's already coming into a good room, and he just made the room better, and we're excited for that.

Q. Trent, there's a lot of talk about his floor and his ceiling. Where do you see his floor and where do you see his ceiling for this guy?

TRENT BAALKE: Well, all of these guys, all of these young guys coming into the league, they obviously got here on the efforts they put forth and what they did at the collegiate level. There's a lot of learning to do for all of these guys coming in. We feel very strongly about him as a player that we are going to end up with a good football player. But it's not going to be without a lot of work on his part.

So the ceiling is up to him. We're going to do our best to put him in position to reach that ceiling, but at the end of the day it's really on these guys, these young men to come in, put in the time both mentally and physically, to reach the ceiling that they're all capable of reaching.

Q. Trent, a lot of folks questioning that the production, quote-unquote, at least in the numbers department wasn't there. The sack numbers aren't there. What would you say to those critics who may say you're taking a guy who didn't have the college production of some of the other edge rushers on the board?

TRENT BAALKE: Yeah, you can't make excuses for any player. What we can do is look at the film and watch production. There's a lot of things that go into production. It's not at the end of the day how many sacks they tally or how many pressures they have. There's a run element to the game, too. So there's a lot of ways to look at production, and we feel very comfortable about his production run and pass with a lot of upside.

But again, he's got to come in like these young guys do, they've got to come in and earn it.

Q. The report just surfaced about a car accident that he was involved in two weeks ago; I was curious if you knew about that and if you were able to comment.

TRENT BAALKE: Absolutely we knew about it, but no comment.

Q. Following up a little bit on the question regarding production, in terms of efficiency, you talked about it's not just sacks, but in terms of efficiency, in terms of the times he was actually allowed to go get the quarterback as opposed to other standard edge rushers in the draft, what did you think about his efficiency not just in the times he was able to get the quarterback versus the time he was actually allowed to try and do it?

TRENT BAALKE: Well, I think when you watch his film, the one thing he does, he does an excellent job of cancelling his gap. They played a very gap-oriented defense. He played up and down the line of scrimmage from the A gap all the way out to the D gap, and he rarely was out of gap. He's a very gap sound football player. They do a good job of coaching there. This young guy is going to come in with some great coaching behind him. He's young, he's 21 years old and a lot to learn, especially when you step into this league and this arena.

Again, the expectation is for him to come in, settle him into one position and get him comfortable, get him playing, and then take it from there in terms of the versatility.

Q. What does it say about his instincts that he was able to play all the way across the line and be as effective as he was?

TRENT BAALKE: I think it says a lot. Every technique you play it's a little bit different. You play over the head of the center and you've got a triffecta coming at you. You play over the guard, that's a whole other element. You play inside eye on the tackle, that's another technique you've got to learn. All these techniques take time, take feel. He's got a lot of natural feel to his game, especially playing along the line of scrimmage. But he also did an excellent job playing on his feet in the snaps that he played on his feet, and he did that I would say roughly 15 percent of the time or whatever that allotted to.

But he's proven he can do all the things that we're going to ask him to do in our system and have the versatility to do it and do it at a high level.

Q. Do you see him as far as his strength, obviously the versatility is an asset, but what about his ability to be an interior defensive lineman also? Do you see him

in that role?

DOUG PEDERSON: Well, I would echo what Trent said about him. We've got to get him in here first and we've got to get him in one position. That's one of the things we liked about Travon is his versatility and the fact that he can move up and down the defensive line.

It's something that as we go and as we grow with him, knowing that he's been able to do that, maybe you come up with a package or two where he goes down inside on third down or something of that nature. But again, for right now, let's get him in here and let's get him working with our guys, with our coaches, get him in one spot and get him with the group.

Q. Trent, just to circle back on the process, when did you finally arrive at the decision? And then the second part, how close it was (indiscernible) Aidan?

TRENT BAALKE: Well, let's answer the second part first. It was a process for a lot of these guys. We had it narrowed down to six, seven guys for quite some time, and we were working through that, working through the fits. I'm not going to get into comparing Travon to Aidan or any other player in the draft. These guys are all individuals and there's -- you look at them for what they are and how they were played in the system they were played in and try to envision how that's going to fit the system that we employ.

As far as when did we come up with the final decision, it's never final until you meet with ownership, and we met with ownership yesterday, had a good meeting with Shad for about an hour and a half, two hours in the draft room, and that's when we actually finalized it.

Q. What does it say about Walker that he played some of the best football in those two playoff games like that? Do you love that part about a guy that really shows up when the stakes are the highest?

TRENT BAALKE: You're always looking for guys that rise to the biggest moments, right? He's played some very consistent football all year long. This isn't a guy, and it was mentioned earlier, this isn't a guy that just jumped on the screen because he ran 4.51 in the 40-yard dash at the combine. He played some very good football throughout the course of the year. I think he got on the scene a little late because people weren't expecting him to be in the draft this year. They weren't expecting -- as he got better and as it became more evident that he was going to probably enter the draft, I think that's when people started taking much harder looks at him.

Q. Question for either Doug or Trent. When you guys

were talking to Georgia coaches, what did they sort of tell you about Travon, the type of player that you guys are getting, and then obviously the type of person he is?

DOUG PEDERSON: Well, to speak to him as a person, just a humble, down-to-earth, great character guy. Comes from a really good family background, supportive family, and a guy that just wants to work. Conversations with their coaches, that's exactly what we got.

Those were all the things that we -- as we go through this process, we try to figure out. We've tried to figure out these players that way in talking to some of their position coaches, and obviously Coach Smart down there at Georgia.

Look, they're a National Championship team, and for a reason. They've got a really good defense, and there's a lot of good players on that defense, and Travon is one of them.

It was just exciting to kind of get to know this player, as we do with all the players over the last several months, and really dive into who they are as people and how they can fit our room.

Q. How much is he going to make guys like Josh Allen better in terms of coming off the edge, now all of a sudden you have guys might be freed up a little bit more?

DOUG PEDERSON: Well, I think that's something yet to be seen. We've got to get him in here. We've got to get him coached up, we've got to get him comfortable, start learning the defense, and we'll see as we go how that affects other people on the defense.

Q. Trent was talking about he has a lot to learn, he's going to be a rookie, but how do you balance there's that learning curve of being a rookie with the target that inevitably comes with being the No. 1 overall pick?

DOUG PEDERSON: Yeah, and that's a real thing with these players. I think we as coaches and as staff, we just surround ourselves with this guy and we do our best to really let him focus on football. One thing I know about Travon, too, is he just wants to focus on football. There's going to come some responsibility, and he understands that. There was a conversation that he and I had about that. Just those expectations outside of football. He's willing to embrace that.

I think the more that he does embrace it, especially early



on, the football part, he'll be able to settle into. But it's also my job to kind of maybe shield him just a little bit from some of the stuff on the outside and let him just focus on football.

Q. Trent, I know a big buzzword during this process has been length. How exactly is that important in the evaluation process, and in Travon's case specifically, how does his length help him as a player?

TRENT BAALKE: Well, length is important. It's not that guys with shorter arms or less length can't play the game. There's been plenty that have played it and played it at a high level, but it's certainly an asset if they use it to their full potential. He's extremely long, 35 plus arm length, 85 wingspan. The guy has got great length at a little bit over 6'5".

If used properly, and he knows how to use it, it can be a great advantage for any player at any position, especially on the defensive side of the ball.

Q. As a player and as a coach, you have seen players reach their upside potential. What did it take for those players to get there, that you've personally seen?

DOUG PEDERSON: I just think it takes the support and just having a support structure around these players, and I mean that with the coaching staff and the guys that I've brought on to my staff that have coached these positions and they've coached them at the high level where they've played at this level and they understand what it takes to elevate somebody's play.

I think, too, when you surround a player with other good players, they want to do well, and they want to do well by their teammates. With the guys that we have currently and now we add -- you add Travon into that room and his work ethic and who he is as a person and how he wants to improve and get better, as Trent mentioned earlier, I think the ceiling is what he wants to make it.

Q. You've seen that; you've seen guys do that, and it takes a combination of all those things and their own commitment, correct?

DOUG PEDERSON: Correct.

Q. What were the challenges of having the No. 1 pick and not needing a quarterback and having the No. 1 pick and not being a particularly strong quarterback year? Did you have calls for any trades or you were going to pick No. 1 regardless?

TRENT BAALKE: No, it was a quiet year that way. When

you're sitting at 1, and obviously nobody had a quarterback valued at that position, so we didn't field any calls for the No. 1 spot.

Q. On the trade front, do you think there's likely to be some calls about moving back into the late first by tonight or do you think you're done for tonight?

TRENT BAALKE: We're not done. We're going to see how this thing falls. I shouldn't say we're not -- we could be done. It takes two to tango, right, when you talk about trading back in. But we're going to see how the board falls. We've got some things we're taking a look at, so there's a possibility we jump back into this thing, so we're certainly not putting the phones down right now.

Q. That was a bold prediction you made to the fans about never having another No. 1 pick.

DOUG PEDERSON: That's okay.

Q. To that human element, though, when you hear that the guy you're about to draft No. 1 has a car accident, what emotions are you feeling before you even get to finding out all of the facts?

DOUG PEDERSON: Yeah, for me personally, I go straight to the person. Take football out of it. It's a life incident, right? It's a life situation. So obviously my concern and my thoughts and players were with him. We wanted to find out as much information as we could, obviously, about it, and felt like we got everything that we needed answered, and he was okay. That's where my thoughts went.

Q. Relief, huh?

DOUG PEDERSON: Take football out of it, yep.

Q. Let's finish on some positive news, Josh Allen, fifth-year option exercised here this afternoon. Knowing that Travon was just picked and knowing that Josh Allen in the fold now through 2023, what went into that decision and what do those two do for each other moving forward?

TRENT BAALKE: Well, I guess I'll answer that or you can, but first of all, they earned it. That's the important thing. Both of them earned it. As you're trying to build this thing, you're trying to keep as many of your players as possible. The best way to build a winning franchise is to draft well, sign players. They perform well, you re-sign them and you build that culture that you're going to take care of your own.

I think this is a good start. These two guys have earned it and we're going to continue to work as we move forward to



continue to re-sign some guys that earn it. I guess that's the best I can lay it out there for you.

Q. Doug, how can Travon help open up Josh and vice versa?

DOUG PEDERSON: Well, again, it kind of goes back to a little bit what I was mentioning earlier. Until we get Travon in here and working and to see those pieces working together, then we'll have a better picture as to how that will open up each other. But again, just like Trent said, with Josh, he earned it. He earned that, and we're excited for him, obviously, and his family.

It solidifies the defense that we feel has been pretty good here recently.

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