

Jacksonville Jaguars Media Conference

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James Gladstone

Liam Coen

Weekday Press Conference



JAMES GLADSTONE: There's still a lot of fun dialogue to be had amongst our crew. We have the scouting staff in the building for the first time this week, kind of rounding out a lot of the conversations we've had with the coaching staff over the last month, allowing the cement to settle and start to harden here as we creep towards the night of the draft, that fifth overall selection.

Q. What has it been like going through this process?

JAMES GLADSTONE: I'll start, kick it over to Liam.

At the end of the day it's still familiar territory. You're talking football. My mind remains rooted in a lot of the same things that it always has been.

I think you all will remember this phrase, but focusing our intention on intangibly rich human beings and allow that to be our north star, and making it so it's very clear amongst our group that's what we're really leaning into, having everybody embrace and that feel that.

It's been a joy, fulfilling. Looking forward to allowing those discussions to become reality. We're not far off from that. Just like the players that are included in this draft class, right, their dream is to get drafted. For those guys, that's about to be reality.

It's been fun to have that be the case for us personally, to see our dreams become reality. Working in tandem, it's been fulfilling, it's been a joy.

Q. One of the biggest issues with this team last year, a lot of people's minds, was the lack of toughness in both interior lines. You invested considerable capital in free agency. Do you feel the draft is also another avenue to add reinforcement to that? Seems like you can never have enough.

JAMES GLADSTONE: Glad you asked that because

something that's been very clear to both Liam and I, something we both value innately, is physical and mental toughness. I know that probably was apparent just by default the offensive line and defensive line, that breeds that sort of mentality and that type of play. We prioritized addressing offensive line through pro free agency. I think we'll continue to do that throughout the draft.

I don't think we're limited at the fronts, right? That stuff should show up at all levels of our offensive and defensive operation, clearly on special teams. That's always going to remain at the forefront.

Those two elements in tandem is really a real combination that we covet. I think you'll hear just about every time that Liam steps to a podium, he's going to mention some version of physical and mental toughness as really what he's hunting up.

Q. How bothersome was it for either of you that on third-and-one last year, Jaguars' batting average was barely over 50%?

LIAM COEN: I think that's something that ultimately you look at last year in the NFL, we were first in Tampa in short yardage. Although I'd love to say that we just ran duo down everybody's throat, I can't say that. There was some misdirection, jet sweeps, whatever it was, different ways of getting that yard.

Ultimately, yes, you'd love to say, Man, we just have to gain to yard, we should be able to do this with the most simple plays in football.

It just depends on how you're built and what those matchups look like obviously. It is on us as coaches to hopefully put those guys in better positions to be successful that way.

Q. James, can you take us through the decision not to do in-person visits, not bringing prospects here?

JAMES GLADSTONE: I think there's a lot of layers to not doing those facility visits that you all are accustomed to, top-30 visits as they're phrased.

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It goes back a while in my experience. Let's take it this direction. The implicit bias that can come to life this late in the process, the last player you might sit down with, how that might differ from the first player you sit down with knowing it's closer to the decision that's upcoming.

In addition to that, like, so much of the work that's done in preparation for these decisions starts years in advance. The sourced intel from those who have lived with these individuals is likely to be more accurate than me sitting down with a prospect for a short period of time and attempting to dissect who that human being is.

So I don't view myself as having this extreme super power of deciphering the complexity of a person in an hour, right? I would probably say I can work that in tandem, but there are other mechanisms that we tend to lean into to help us determine whether or not a player is, in fact, a fit for us, more than just a singular touch point that would be a top-30 visit.

We have a lot of additional mechanisms that we deploy that don't necessarily put us at risk for the rest of the world to know what direction we're heading. So often those become public-facing touch points at which point you're sacrificing some version of strategy come draft day as well.

Q. How much have you been able to implement in terms of that strategy in two months? How much have you actually been able to implement in terms of that process?

JAMES GLADSTONE: There are some specific efficiencies that we've been able to sort of fold into the process. In large part there's a good bit of information already at our disposal and a lot of internal knowledge that already exists that's really helpful.

Having our scouting staff on-site for the first time this week, all being under the same roof, it was really cool. We got a chance to sit down yesterday and chop through a large chunk of the prospects, got a chance to share with them my impressions of day one with them.

Let's just set the stage. You get into a draft meeting, and each person has a piece of paper or a notebook in front of them or their laptop. They're referencing their reports that they've done on each of the prospects, looking down, reading those reports out loud.

Something I appreciate more than anything is when an evaluator or scout treats those moments like you're at the watercooler, like you're just having a normal conversation, as opposed to this boardroom meeting.

Our group inherently did that. They made it just a natural conversation. They didn't just revert to their notes but rather what they already knew in their minds because they were so prepared for that moment on their own.

That was a really cool moment for me to see our scouting staff walk in the door as prepared as I could have ever hoped for those initial conversations.

I use the phrase 'being a fighter not a fencer', right? Instead of having to put on armor, pick up a sword to fight, they simply just had to close their fist. They were ready for that moment.

I look forward to the rest of the conversations we're going to have here over the next nine days, see what else settles as the cement begins to harden.

Q. James, just the entire process of you being in L.A., all the scouting that you did, then come here and see what Trent and Ethan and their staff have done, kind of comparing and contrasting, how difficult was that? Was there anything during that process that maybe really surprised you or caught you off guard?

JAMES GLADSTONE: I don't know that there were any surprises or anything catching me off guard as much as it was it's been very impressive, the adaptability of that group. Hey, here are the items we're emphasizing and prioritizing. May look a little different than what you're used to. To be able to see them pivot away from maybe things they held at a premium in the past, that flexibility has really stood out to me amongst the group.

Q. What is your comfort level in terms of talking trades and things like that? Do you like to have those discussions a few days prior to Thursday night or are you pretty comfortable even if it's on the clock being able to make that kind of move?

JAMES GLADSTONE: I think adaptability is going to be key through that. It's never going to be done until it gets sent into the league.

We'll have as many conversations as people are willing to engage on. I don't think that now versus on the clock is going to be anything that I would say isn't of interest.

Q. When do you like to have your board kind of final?

JAMES GLADSTONE: Right before we pick. It's interesting. It's not so black and white, right? You can probably think about the decisions you make in a day, especially when you have the chance to sleep on it,



whether or not it's the right one or the wrong one.

We've gone through a ton of exercises over the last five weeks to where we sleep with decisions, right? We say, This is exactly what we're doing over the course of the draft. How do we feel about this outcome? We wrestle with that, we sit with it, we reflect, then we try a new one.

That's been fun because I know it's not something that the larger group has been used to doing, at least in that long of a runway. But for me it's the way in which my mind works.

I've in the past experienced the moments when you send in a pick, you know when you press 'enter' whether or not it was the right one for you. That's what I've enjoyed doing over the last handful of weeks with our group, sort of treating it like we just pressed 'enter', trying to wrestle with whether or not that felt the best or if it's exactly what we would have wanted to be the case.

Just like any player going out onto the grass in preparation for a Sunday, we actually want to treat these reps like real life. So trying to create that as often as possible has been certainly enjoyable. But look forward to it actually bringing with it some positive results here soon.

Q. To that point, can you map out what the next week and a half is for you from a process standpoint, what kind of things you will go through to try to be as prepared as you can be?

JAMES GLADSTONE: Yeah, I can.

Right now we're using the mornings with our scouting staff, afternoons with our coaching staff. We'll do that throughout the remainder of this week. Into next week we've got mock drafts that we'll dissimulate before getting to draft day.

Q. When you go through the mock draft situation, what are you doing to pull as much information as you can to have that be as accurate as possible?

JAMES GLADSTONE: I say that it's more operationally to make sure that all of our tech is functioning as much as it is like actually having a draft come off, so to speak.

Q. James, I kind of looked up my own version of 'intangibly rich'.

JAMES GLADSTONE: Good (laughter).

Q. Hopefully we got this right.

JAMES GLADSTONE: Not only are our fans intangibly

curious, so is our media.

Q. I've been on it, man (laughter). At number five, is it more obvious, do you have to pay attention to the intangibles? Sometimes there's things that you don't see at five, it's a little more obvious, especially if you're not in the market for a quarterback.

JAMES GLADSTONE: Is it obvious? I would like to think it's obvious. A lot of this, it just requires discipline. For the most part, you become so intimate in understanding who these people are and the buildup to those draft day decisions, by the end of it you know what you're taking on and you have to make the decision as to whether or not you can accept that person for who they are.

The people that we will accept for who they are and invite and select will be those that are intangibly rich. I've been asked quite often, What does that actually mean? I promise that whatever just came to your mind is what I'm thinking, it exists (smiling). It's in my mind as well as yours.

I was asked right off the jump, physical and mental toughness. That's a part of intangibly rich. It's a big part of it. Those two elements will be top of mind.

When you look at our draft day call sheet, the items that we're bucketing in that intangibly rich category are the largest, brightest number and color on our call sheet. It's because that's where we start. At every point of player acquisition, that's where we start. Doesn't mean it will be exactly the order that we select in or pick or choose from, but it will be where we begin every decision.

Q. When you look at the depth chart of this draft by position, could you outline a couple positions where you think it's deep enough where whether you draft a player early in the second or middle of the third, first round versus second round, where you think you could still get a pretty darn decent player without it being a significant dropoff.

JAMES GLADSTONE: Yeah, quite frankly I think that every draft, there ends up being players that are very good at all positions from start to finish. I think that that probably doesn't come as a surprise when you look at the most recent drafts that I've been a part of, especially with those day three selections, even those undrafted college free agents, who in Los Angeles had played a high volume of snaps and contributed in a significant way early in their rookie contract.

Yeah, I think there are some public-facing positions that everybody has a pretty good understanding that are deep in that year's draft. I don't think there's a single position



that we would label as being without talent. All of 'em can produce somebody for us that would contribute in a notable way fairly early in their rookie contract along the entirety of the draft.

Q. What is your assessment of the receiving core of this draft, its talent, its viability as a fit for your franchise?

LIAM COEN: I think there's some good, sound, solid players at a few different spots, where there's always some ball-in-hand athletes. Also a couple of guys that can win 50/50 balls. There's some pretty good football players all throughout the draft at the position.

I wouldn't say it's maybe as sparkling as some other drafts, right, where you see there's a couple good ones up there. We feel good about some of the guys a little bit later on that can contribute for us, definitely a position we'd be looking for.

Q. James, last time we talked to you, you referenced the defensive tackle, the edge, the idea of getting rookies on the grass early. What are you looking for when it comes to an edge or defensive tackle player? Is a player rugged enough to play the edge? What are traits that you and your staff look for?

LIAM COEN: First of all, physically and mentally tough comes to mind. Guys that can set an edge in the run game. Play long. Doesn't mean they have to be 6'4" and 260. Can they run stout in the run game, while also giving you a different version of a rush plan, right? A little bit different wave of rusher that can come in and do some different things in some third downs, get-back-on-track situations, that can actually burn an edge and be able to get off the edge and go a little bit for us. Definitely something we looked for.

Q. You talked about leaning on rookies before. You guys are about to add a high number of young guys to the roster soon...

LIAM COEN: It is exciting. A conversation we had with the staff, something that we don't want to fear whatsoever. I think naturally as a coach you just go to a safe place of a veteran, which I completely respect and appreciate, but it's definitely something we're going to lean into. The guys should be excited about it.

You can continue to coach hard and get the best out of these guys when they're freshly in the league, really want to do best. We're excited about that factor.

Q. Liam, what is the thing you enjoy the most or the

thing that's going to make an adjustment for you going through this process now as a head coach? Probably more input than you had before, right?

LIAM COEN: Yeah. Just having a larger appreciation for every position on the grass, including special teams. Special teams, when we're evaluating a wideout or a DB, a safety, a corner, a back or a tight end, what can his special teams contribution be, as well? That's not something I ever really had to go to that place.

That's been exciting to learn more about from James, from the other coaches, seeing their vision for these players. That's been a huge learning curve for me and experience, where you're normally, Hey, offense.

Every time you watch an offensive player, defensive player, players pop. Your eyes start to go to those players that pop. Now it's truly evaluating how does this player fit into our roster right now, where can we see them playing on each down and distance, packages, things like that where you start to tweak your thinking a little bit.

Q. James, do you let yourself think about the first pick setting the tone for the entire tenure of your regime?

JAMES GLADSTONE: I think naturally that's absolutely where your mind goes. We've had discussions on that subject a number of times.

Certainly feel really good about the pot of players right now that we're discussing, and that that would align with all the messages that we would like to send to the locker room, to our fan base, to the greater football landscape about who the Jacksonville Jaguars are going to be moving forward.

Q. (No microphone.)

JAMES GLADSTONE: No.

Q. Is that philosophy or because the local schools didn't have what you were looking for?

JAMES GLADSTONE: I think in a similar breath is the top-30 visits. It's familiar territory for me not to participate in that. I think it was certainly based off where we were at, this being the first cycle we're working together, spending that energy in a different way made sense.

Q. Seems like one more topic, not testing during the off-season, how do you adjust to get a full picture of a player when you don't have those numbers?

JAMES GLADSTONE: That's a great question, by the way.



I think many people are leaning in a different direction than just strictly those testing and measurement marks. Certainly it's helpful when you can compare apples to apples one player to the next.

Data tracking to us and on-field speeds is going to weigh much differently than a 40-yard dash.

Q. In terms of who you have in the locker room right now, coach, when it comes to Brian Thomas Jr. being the number one, who could you say confidently is the number two and three that can take the pressure off him?

LIAM COEN: We're going to spread the ball out hopefully equally. That was the nice thing about being last year with Tampa, we had to play a lot of different players in different personnel groupings.

I think you look naturally right now at Parker Washington and Dymari Brown at the receiver positions. Then saying Brenton Strange continues to ascend. How do we use our two running backs to be able to supplement some of that usage, get other players involved early on, so defenses can't cloud BT and be all over him, that we have other guys that can win and be explosive with the ball in their hands, ultimately share that wealth, that play-making ability.

The ball is snapped for the beginning of the game, within the first quarter if you haven't touched the ball, it's a hard one to continue to get through. How do we get all of our play-makers a touch early on to get them going and involved in the game. Those guys that I just mentioned right now are guys that we're going to spotlight.

Q. You have teams that will not take guys simply because they've been character concerns, off-the-field issues. When you're doing your draft board, are you taking these guys off the board and won't draft them, regardless?

JAMES GLADSTONE: There are quite a few things. At the end of the day we focus the majority of our intentions on who we are really interested in, who fits the profile for really what we want to invite into this environment. If you're not intangibly rich, it's going to be a hard time for that person to really mesh here.

I think those that will thrive in the environment that we create and cultivate are going to be people that fit the mold for what we've talked about to date. That is all the physical and mental toughness attributes. If you don't meet those thresholds that we've set, it's going to be something we sort of go in a different direction from.

Q. James, when you're talking about trying to get to intangibly rich, you don't have top-30 visits, not on-site for pro day, what are other mechanisms you touched on in getting that information?

JAMES GLADSTONE: Yeah, some of those we like to keep in-house and private because we feel it's a version of a competitive advantage, while at the same time you can look towards the traditional metrics, ways going about understanding who a person is from an intangible standpoint. That is rooted in the film evaluation, some things that aren't necessarily related to a physical quality.

Then you get into the sourced information from a player's past, whether it's college campus, hometown, et cetera. All those things begin to get weighted, serve as sort of our thresholds for whether or not they're somebody we feel like fits our mold.

Q. Have you had to teach that to the other staff, to get that information?

JAMES GLADSTONE: Yeah, in terms of our current staff, they're already going down the traditional methods of bringing that stuff to life. Then in terms of decision making, leveraging that in a way that may not be sort of the traditional model for what the Jaguars have seen in the past.

At the end of the day it doesn't necessarily require any additional education, but will into the future as we have full cycles to work with as a full scouting staff.

Q. Not to be a smart ass, 'intangibly rich', is that a phrase you used at the Rams?

JAMES GLADSTONE: It's not. It's not.

Q. Where did you come up with it?

JAMES GLADSTONE: I don't know. When did I say it for the first time (smiling)?

Look, so much of that stuff, it resonates for both Liam and I. We've got a lot of spinoffs.

LIAM COEN: Yeah.

JAMES GLADSTONE: We have a lot of spinoffs.

LIAM COEN: That was actually my wife.

JAMES GLADSTONE: You got to drop that one in there (laughter).



No, I think naturally that is what both Liam and I are built on. So we gravitate towards those types of people. I don't know that it was anything other than just what surfaced at the moment. I guess at my first press conference. But it definitely is something I want to hang on to.

I'm not ready to release that yet because I just keep saying it at every chance I get, right? I think in some way, shape or form, it paints a picture for what it is that we're hunting up.

Q. How many times did you have to explain it to your guys?

JAMES GLADSTONE: That doesn't take much because most evaluations generally include some version of physical qualities and intangible qualities already rooted in what you're measuring. So it didn't take much time for them to understand, This is the bucket that we're leaning into as a driver for our decisions, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you for your time.

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