

# New England Patriots Media Conference

Foxborough, Massachusetts, USA

## Bill Belichick

### Draft Media Conference

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**Q. Was Cole Strange the top player on your board there at pick No. 29?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah. I mean, we felt like that was a good -- a guy that fits well -- Cole fits well into our team and our system. Obviously think he's a good player.

**Q. How much was Cole on your radar while he played at Chattanooga? And by all accounts, he had an exceptional week at the Senior Bowl. Is this what raised his stock and really opened your eyes in terms of making him your pick?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, again, it's a composite of work with any player, so whatever opportunities you have to evaluate him, you evaluate him. Senior Bowl was part of it. That was definitely a move up competitively. They played a couple SEC teams and his workout was pretty good, as well. He's a pretty athletic guy with good size, smart. He does a lot of things, has a lot of good tools to work with. He's got a long way to go like every player does when he comes into the NFL, but look forward to working with him.

**Q. Can you explain how the trade went down? Is that something that came up on the clock, and how much consideration was there at 21 to just staying there and maybe taking the guy that the Chiefs came up for, McDuffie?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, there were a couple options there. We did what we felt like was best and made the best decision that we -- felt like we made the best decision we could, so that's what we did.

**Q. Was Cole in consideration when you were picking at 21? And what separated him from the other guys on the board down there at 29?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, well, if we had stayed at 21, then we would have obviously picked somebody. Probably a good chance it would have been him. I don't know, there were several teams that we talked to prior to when we made the trade. There were some other conversations

going on there, but ultimately that's the one we chose.

Glad Cole was there when we picked, and as I said, feel like we made the best decision that we could at 21.

**Q. Bill, obviously you guys have an opening at guard right now, but can you tell us about your evaluation as far as Strange or do you think there's a chance that center might be his best long-term position, or do you think he's just a guard for you?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, we'll see. He's played all the positions on the offensive line. So we'll see. I'm not sure.

**Q. Did you have a belief that if you waited until your next pick that Strange would be gone, or did you just have conviction on the player?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, he wouldn't have lasted much longer.

**Q. Do you have any consideration to moving down again when you were there at 29?**

BILL BELICHICK: You know, there are usually options when we're on the clock. Did we have them? Maybe. You know, I'm not sure how far we would have -- maybe. It's hard to say. We didn't really get to that point. You know, again, a lot of times teams call, and if you open the conversation, then they go further, and if you don't, then they don't. Then you make your pick.

**Q. What stands out about Cole as a run blocker when you watched him?**

BILL BELICHICK: Again, he's long, he's athletic. He's physically tough. He's an aggressive player. I think he has a good combination of skills, run and pass, movement, length, strength, again, all of which will hopefully get better, like they will with any player coming from college to the National Football League. But I think he has a good skill set, and he's a smart player that makes a lot of good decisions on the interior line there, timing, when to come off, and combo blocks, things like that.

But you know, as always, it'll be good to work with a player, but he has a lot to learn and a lot to do.

**Q. What makes Cole Strange a first-round talent in your evaluation?**

BILL BELICHICK: All the things I just talked about.

**Q. Is there anything in your evaluation leading up to the draft that really stood out to you?**

BILL BELICHICK: Again, I think he has a good combination of skills and ability. He played well. He played well against good competition at Chattanooga, both in their conference and when they played up, and I thought he played well against competition at the Senior Bowl. Yeah, he's a smart player that's played multiple positions. We'll see how it goes, but I think he can handle -- well, we'll see exactly how it turns out here, but I think he has an opportunity to be competitive at a couple different things, but we'll see how it goes.

**Q. I was reading a couple scouting reports, and they both pointed out that he seems to be -- Cole Strange seems to be a really aggressive player. Is that something that stood out to you on film, and if so, how much is that a trait that you value in an interior offensive lineman?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, I think you always want those guys on the line of scrimmage to be aggressive. You don't want them -- passive is probably not the adjective that we want to describe offensive and defensive linemen with. But yeah, I think he has a good play style, and as I said, a good skill set. Like any player, he's got a long way to go, a lot of things to work on, and we'll start working with him on those things, but look forward to it.

**Q. Did that seem to be something that he kind of relished or came naturally to him? Because I've seen the single bar facemask, no gloves, it seems like someone who wants to get his hands dirty in there.**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, I don't think the equipment and all that is that big of a factor for me, but the play style and -- again, offensive lineman, he'll have a chance to finish blocks, clean the pocket, help the runner downfield, things like that. Yeah, those are good qualities for an offensive lineman to have.

**Q. I just wanted to go back a little bit. I know obviously you took Logan in the first round back in 2005, but over the last 10 years you've invested the least amount of draft capital into interior offensive linemen than any other position on the roster. What made Cole Strange the exception to that kind of pattern the last 10, 12 years?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, again, every draft is different in the way it unfolds. Obviously it's a new set of players every year and a new combination of position and circumstances around you based on what other teams do. I don't really like to compare drafts to each other because they're all unique, they're all different. As I said, I feel like we did what was best for the football team with the opportunities that we had today, and we'll try to do the same thing tomorrow and Saturday and post-draft and try to make the most of each opportunity that we have.

**Q. Is it fair to say that open vacancy from the starting lineup a year ago at guard was a major factor in selecting Cole here?**

BILL BELICHICK: No, not really. I don't think we ever intentionally go into a draft trying to say, well, we have to get this position or that position. Sometimes it works out that way, which it did last year, and it did this year. But it wasn't like there weren't other positions and other players that we would have considered.

The board was -- players came off the board pretty much like we thought they would for the most part, and that's -- again, felt like we made the best option -- we took the best option that we had, whether it was at 21 or 29, whatever it ended up being, 29. At those two points we felt like we made the best choice that we could.

**Q. As you look ahead, I think there's 10 picks you guys still have between the 2nd and seventh rounds. How would you sort of assess the opportunities for the team, and how do they sort of marry up with how you view the overall draft?**

BILL BELICHICK: Yeah, well, I think that's -- we're going to have a lot of time tomorrow to reset the board and kind of take a look at just the question you asked, and rather than try to answer it now, really our focus was more on the first 32 picks and how we saw that shaping up and kind of what the teams -- even though there was quite a bit of movement, but going into it we tried to have an awareness of what some of the teams around us were doing.

But there were a number of trades, there were a couple of player-for-player trades, which is kind of unusual to see. The deck kind of got shuffled a little bit there. I'd really rather than guess at an answer here, we'll go back tomorrow, we'll restack our board just like we did a few hours ago going into the first round. We'll take a look at the projected draft order and so forth and who's around us. As you said, we have a number of picks, so we probably have some flexibility with what we could do over the next two days, different than what we had a few hours ago going into the draft, and try to see what our options are.

I'm sure we'll hear from other teams or have some type of communication with other teams, and maybe that factors into what we do or maybe it doesn't. We'll have to wait and see what that is and how it presents itself.

The question you're asking is the same one I'm asking. We'll get to work on that tomorrow and try to figure that out.

But you're right, the number of picks and the depth in the draft that we have currently in the third, fourth -- in these kind of mid rounds, we'll have to take a look at that and see, okay, what do we think we can do with that, and would we rather be in a different position than we're in or do we like where we're at and so forth, and maybe somebody will come to us with something to consider, one way or the other, moving up, moving down. So we'll just have to -- I'm sure we'll know a lot more tomorrow once things against rolling, but we need to reset the board and kind of re-strategize like we did today and then we'll do the same thing after tomorrow's draft. We'll reset the board for Saturday and see what that looks like.

Yep, that's the plan for tomorrow.

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