The Mink is off to another trip to Dallas to attend the NFL draft with cousin Obey.  We annually match wits with the best NFL draft experts including Mel Kiper, Mike Mayock and Todd McShay.  Unfortunately, we do not get paid for it, but we have a pretty good track record of picking the results.

This draft is again one of the deepest drafts in recent memory due to a large number of juniors declaring for the draft with a record of 123 juniors/underclassman declaring for the 2018 NFL draft. Each year more and more juniors are declaring for the NFL draft which improves the depth of the draft. As a result, you can get first round talent in rounds 2 and 3. This draft is extremely deep at most positions particularly running back, tight end, cornerback/safety and interior offensive lineman. Teams will receive value in all rounds of the draft this year. In some cases, teams will be able to draft some starters in rounds 2-4 due to the depth of this draft.

We do expect a lot of movement and trades in the first round due to teams desperate at the quarterback position trying to obtain one of the top 5 quarterbacks in this draft. The quarterback position does not have high end blue chip prospects but this draft offers starting caliber quarterbacks. You will not find a Manning or Luck in this draft.

The strengths of the 2018 draft include:

1. Running Back – This is a deep draft for running backs. There are several blue chip prospects in this year’s draft class, but the draft is deep with talent that will allow teams to bolster the running back position in the first three to four rounds of the draft. We project that up to 15 running backs will be selected in the first four rounds following a strong class of running backs in 2017. Many teams will look to duplicate the success of last year’s running backs with Alvin Kamara and Kareem Hunt who were drafted in later rounds and made significant contributions to their teams. Top prospects include: Sequon Barkley, RB, Penn State and the Georgia duo of Sony Michel and Nick Chubb. All three of these players could go in the first round and immediately upgrade the playmaking ability of your offense. Barkley is the best back in this draft and his combine performance showed just what a great athlete he is. He combines vision, power, speed and athleticism to lead this class. At the combine, he ran a 4.4 40 yard dash for a back over 230 pounds and had a 41” vertical jump. Barkley can do it all and fits the mode of today’s NFL back that requires versatility. Chubb may be the most NFL ready running back in this draft. Some teams may be concerned about his knee injury suffered in college but he was extremely productive at Georgia. He runs well between the tackles and is extremely explosive in the open field. Michel is often compared to Alvin Kamara who had tremendous success in the NFL last year for the Saints. He fits the “new” NFL offense and can beat you through the air and ground. He is the “jack of all trades” running back in this draft. He is a tremendous all-purpose running back that can beat you through the air and ground. You will be able to move him around the offensive formation to cause matchup problems. Behind Barkley, he is our next favorite back in this draft. The next tier of running backs include: Derrius Guice, RB, LSU, Kerryon Johnson, RB, Auburn, Rashaad Penny, RB, San Diego State and Ronald Jones, RB, USC. Guice is a tough runner with speed, strength, good instincts and running ability. He could be a good 3 down starter in the NFL. Johnson has good size and athleticism. He was Auburn’s workhouse. He played excellent against top competition and can beat you both running and receiving which is key in today’s NFL offense. Penny led the nation in rushing. Penny is fast for a big back and can run away from the defense in the open field. He is a load as a runner who can run over the opposition. He combines quick feet, power, good balance and decisive running. He will be a great offensive playmaker at the NFL level. Jones is a quick and shifty runner with starting potential. He will need to add weight in order to be a 3 down back in the NFL.
2. Tight Ends – This is an athletically gifted tight end class which continues to follow the trend from last year. Each year we are finding tight ends that offer tremendous athleticism that can stretch the field. At the combine, five tight ends ran a sub “4.7” 40 yard dash. This fits well with the modern NFL offenses that like to run two tight end sets and stretch the middle of the field. We expect up to 10 tight ends to be drafted in the first four rounds of the 2018 NFL draft. The cream of the crop is Hayden Hurst, TE, South Carolina. He possesses a unique size speed ratio having run the 40 in 4.67 at 6-4 250 pounds. This will be a matchup nightmare for any defensive coordinator. As a receiver, Hurst is a real weapon. He is naturally an extremely athletic and fast tight end that can get downfield quickly. We project Hurst to go in the first round. The next blue chip prospect is Dallas Goedert, TE, South Dakota State. Goedert was a dangerous receiving threat over the past two seasons at South Dakota State. As a Senior, he amassed 72 receptions for 1,111 years and 7 touchdowns. He put up even better numbers as a Junior with 92 receptions for 1,293 yards and 11 touchdowns. He combines size and athleticism to produce these results. The next top prospect is Mike Gesicki, TE, Penn State. He was the most athletic tight end at the combine finishing first in most categories with an impressive 4.54 40 yard dash. Gesicki is a receiving tight end that will create mismatch problems in the NFL. Gesicki runs well down the seam with speed to get vertical. He will need to improve his blocking in order to become a complete tight end. Other tight ends expected to go in the first four rounds include: Mark Andrews, TE, Oklahoma, Dalton Schultz, TE, Stanford, Jordan Aikens, TE, Central Florida, Troy Fumagalli, TE, Wisconsin, Chris Herndon, TE, Miami and Durham Smythe, TE, Notre Dame. Each of these tight ends offers the size/speed ratios that the modern day NFL offenses covet.
3. Interior Offensive Lineman – This is an extremely deep draft of interior offensive lineman. There are a few blue chip prospects in this year’s draft class, but the draft is deep with talent that will allow teams to bolster their offensive lines in the first three rounds of the draft. We project that 3-4 interior offensive lineman to go in the first round including: Quenton Nelson, G, Notre Dame, Isaiah Wynn, G, Georgia, Will Hernandez, G, UTEP, Billy Price, G/C, Ohio State and James Daniels, G/C, Iowa. Nelson is the most talented and polished offensive lineman in this draft. Nelson dominated for Notre Dame in 2017, showing the ability to overwhelm defensive lineman as a run blocker and pass protector. He is one of the best guard prospects to come out in the last 10 years and will be selected in the top ten in this year’s draft, which is rare for an interior offensive lineman. Wynn is an excellent run blocker and he blocks with aggression and has a temperament that is well suited for the NFL. He provides versatility as he has played guard, center and tackle. However, he is best suited to play guard in the NFL and will immediately upgrade and NFL offensive line. Hernandez provides the size, athleticism and nastiness to play guard at the next level. He is a bull dozer in the run game and routinely punishes defenders. He is very strong at the point of attack and provides the strength and power that is required for an interior offensive lineman. He was the best guard at the Senior Bowl and had an excellent combine. Price is another first round lineman from Ohio State. He provides tremendous versatility having played both guard and center. Price combines good technique with a nasty temperament to dominate interior defenders. He has above average athleticism and will provide tremendous leadership. Daniels is another versatile interior offensive line prospect having played both guard and center at Iowa. Daniels has good technique and power that help propel an impressive running game at Iowa over the last two years. He is an excellent prospect that will immediately upgrade an NFL offensive line. Other interior offensive lineman expected to go in the first four rounds include: Frank Ragnow, G/C, Arkansas, Austin Corbett, C/G, Nevada, Scott Quessenberry, C/G, UCLA and Braden Smith, G, Auburn. Each of these offensive linemen offer the versatility that the modern day NFL offenses covet.
4. Cornerback/Safety – The cornerback class in 2018 is a deep draft that will allow teams to get great value in the first 4 rounds. Teams looking to improve their secondary will be able to find quality secondary talent in rounds 2 – 4. There are several blue chip cornerback and safety prospects that will be selected in the top 15 in this year’s draft. This draft is loaded with big safeties and corners that can run and offer big time playmaking abilities, which is a premium in today’s NFL. College football displayed some of the best secondary play we have seen in some time in Ohio State and Alabama. We expect only 3-4 corners to be drafted in the first round and 3-4 safeties to be drafted in the first round. We believe the best cornerback in this draft is Denzel Ward of Ohio State. He has excellent size coupled with outstanding ball skills and speed. He ran 4.32 at the combine. He is a complete corner that will be extremely successful at the next level. He will be a Pro Bowl cornerback in the NFL for many years. We also expect Josh Jackson, Iowa, Mike Hughes, Central Florida, and Jaire Alexander, Louisville to go in the first round. All of these prospects will provide immediate value at the cornerback position for the team drafting them. Jackson has the playmaking ability that NFL teams covet. His athleticism doesn’t wow you but he has excellent instincts and ball skills. Hughes is another corner with excellent ball skills. He is a natural cover corner with speed, quick feet and agility. He is also an excellent return guy in the NFL providing more flexibility. He is a well-rounded athlete that does everything well. Alexander is another corner speed and quickness to match up against today’s NFL wide receivers. He was very productive at Louisville and had the best combine performance of any corner in the 2018 draft running an impressive 4.38 40 yard dash. He is a fast athletic corner that can cover all rotes in the NFL route tree. Other corners that will be drafted in the first three rounds include: Donte Jackson, LSU, Carlton Davis, Auburn, Isaiah Oliver, Colorado, JC Jackson, Maryland, Nick Nelson, Wisconsin, Anthony Averett, Alabama and Duke Dawson, Florida. This draft also has some of the best top end talent at safety in years. You have several blue chip prospects in Minkah Fitzpatrick, Alabama, Derwin James, Florida State and Ronnie Harrison, Alabama. Each of these safeties bring tremendous playmaking ability to your secondary and each of these safeties can cover and hit. Fitzpatrick and James will be pro bowl safeties at the next level. Fitzpatrick provides tremendous versatility as he can play in the box, play nickel corner over slot receivers, cover tight ends in man and be the deep safety center fielder that protects the deep part of the field. He will be a top ten pick. James has good instincts and a rare combination of size, speed, physicality and versatility. While James does not offer the same versatility as Fitzpatrick, he will be an excellent safety at the next level. Harrison is another Safety from Alabama that has a strong track record of producing talented NFL secondary prospects. Harrison is a tough run defender who has the athletic skills to cover. Teams will also get great talent after round one including: Justin Reid, Stanford, Terrell Edmunds, Virginia Tech, Jessie Bates, Wake Forest, DeShon Elliott, Texas, and Jordon Whitehead, Pittsburgh.

The areas highlighted above will provide great value in the first day of the draft including rounds, two, three and four because of the depth at these positions.  Several teams have needs at Running Back, Tight End, Cornerback/Safety and Offensive Line. We see these positions dominating the first 3 rounds of the 2018 draft. Running Back and interior Offensive Lineman are particularly deep in this draft.

We see the first round going like this (assuming no trades):

1. **Cleveland Browns – Sam Darnold, QB, USC**

The Browns have been searching for a franchise quarterback for the last 2 decades and have had many opportunities to address this need. Darnold at times looks like a franchise quarterback but his 22 turnovers in 2017 were tied for most in the FBS. This has raised questions with many teams. When he's on his game, he looks like the No. 1 overall pick. The key question is “can he improve his consistency at the NFL level with the right coaching”. The Browns hope so.

1. **New York Giants - Saquon Barkley, RB, Penn State**

The Giants have been searching for a competent running back for a long time and Barkley will provide more than that. Barkley is the best back in this draft and his combine performance showed just what a great athlete he is. He combines vision, power, speed and athleticism to lead this class. At the combine, he ran a 4.4 40 yard dash for a back over 230 pounds and had a 41” vertical jump. Barkley can do it all and fits the mode of today’s NFL back that requires versatility. If the Giants can add Barkley to a group that includes Odell Beckham Jr., Sterling Shepard and Evan Engram, that would be rare skill-position talent. Barkley is more than a great runner -- he is a stellar receiver (he caught 54 passes in 2017) and pass-blocker. Eli Manning should be more efficient with these weapons around him, and the Giants can use another year of evaluation to figure out whether 2017 third-round pick Davis Webb is the heir apparent.

1. **New York Jets - Baker Mayfield, QB, Oklahoma**

The Jets acquired Teddy Bridgewater and re-signed Josh McNown in free agency but there are still many unsettled questions here. In our opinion, Mayfield is the best quarterback in this draft. He is one of the best leaders in this class and his accuracy and anticipation is the best in this class. In the last two years, Mayfield has completed 70% of his passes. Mayfield is ready to start in the NFL right now. Mayfield, the 2017 Heisman Trophy winner, put up huge numbers for the Sooners and measured at 6-foot at the Senior Bowl. His athleticism, accuracy and leadership will make him a great quarterback at the next level.

1. **Cleveland Browns - Bradley Chubb, DE, NC State**

With Saquon Barkley off the board, Cleveland can continue to build their defense with the pick it acquired from the Texans to trade up for Deshaun Watson last year. With this pick the Browns take the best player available and that is Chubb. Pairing Chubb with last year’s number one pick Myles Garrett would give the Brown’s a formidable pair of edge rushers for the next decade. Chubb had 46.5 tackles for loss over the past two seasons. Chubb is a great fit in the Browns scheme and will allow the Brown’s to create havoc in the opponents backfield.

1. **Denver Broncos – Josh Rosen, QB, UCLA**

Denver acquired Case Keenum in free agency but they are still looking for a franchise quarterback. Rosen is the most polished quarterback in this class when he's at his best, and he has rare arm talent. But he was inconsistent in 2017 and dealt with a serious shoulder injury in 2016. His medical reports and interviews with teams at the combine will be extremely important. The Broncos could also target a corner with this pick as they traded their top corner to the Rams.

1. **Indianapolis Colts - Minkah Fitzpatrick, DB, Alabama**

The Colts have many needs to address but they need to start upgrading the defense at all levels. The Colts don't need a quarterback and can grab the best player available. And yes, Fitzpatrick at this point in the draft is the best player available that is not a quarterback. Fitzpatrick provides tremendous versatility as he can play in the box, play nickel corner over slot receivers, cover tight ends in man and be the deep safety center fielder that protects the deep part of the field. Fitzpatrick is a big-time playmaker as a deep safety, outside corner and in the slot -- he really has it all. He is a defensive coordinator's dream and will immediately upgrade the Colt’s secondary.

1. **Tampa Bay Buccaneers - Quenton Nelson, G, Notre Dame**

Nelson is the most talented and polished offensive lineman in this draft. Nelson dominated for Notre Dame in 2017, showing the ability to overwhelm defensive lineman as a run blocker and pass protector. He is one of the best guard prospects to come out in the last 10 years. He's a plug-and-play starter who dominates defenders and can get to the second level. Tampa Bay had one of the league's worst running games in 2017 -- it averaged only 3.7 yards per carry. Nelson would be an instant upgrade.

1. **Chicago Bears - Calvin Ridley, WR, Alabama**

The Bears drafted Mitch Trubinsky last year and it was clear as the season wore on the Bears lacked offensive playmakers. In this draft the Bears need to focus on the offensive side of the ball starting with Ridley. Ridley is far and away the best wideout in this draft class and he will provide an instant upgrade to the Bears ability to make plays on offense. He had 19 career touchdown catches with inconsistent quarterback play.

1. **San Francisco 49ers – Tremaine Edmunds, LB, Virginia Tech**

San Francisco may now have a huge need at linebacker due to Rueben Foster’s legal situation. Edmunds is a tremendous athlete. He could play inside or outside linebacker in the 49ers defense and it's that versatility and athleticism that has scouts drooling. Edmunds had 109 total tackles, 14 tackles for loss and 5.5 sacks in 2017, and he does a good job covering pass-catchers out of the backfield. At 6-5 and 250 pounds, Edmunds doesn't look like a traditional middle linebacker, but he's such a physical specimen that you can't rule it out.

1. **Oakland Raiders - Roquan Smith, ILB, Georgia**

The Raiders continue to add playmakers to their front seven with this pick. Smith could be the centerpiece of Jon Gruden's defense, playing inside linebacker. He had 137 tackles, 14 tackles for loss and 6.5 sacks last season, and he was a force in the College Football Playoff, making plays from sideline to sideline.

1. **Miami Dolphins - Denzel Ward, CB, Ohio State**

The Dolphins need to add playmakers to their defense and Ward would give them a true No. 1 cornerback. He has excellent size coupled with outstanding ball skills and speed. He ran 4.32 at the combine. He is a complete corner that will be extremely successful at the next level. Ward had two interceptions and 15 pass breakups in 2017, and he plays the ball well and has good instincts.

1. **Buffalo Bills - Josh Allen, QB, Wyoming**

Allen drops this far because he only completed 56% of his passes and he played very poorly against power 5 conferences with 1 touchdown and 8 interceptions. He has the best arm talent since Jamarcus Russell. However, accuracy and anticipation is more important than arm strength in the NFL. Allen had a strong week at the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Alabama, improving every day. The NFL statistical comp I make to Allen: Matthew Stafford, who completed 57.1 percent of his passes in 39 games at Georgia and still went No. 1 overall. And Stafford had better talent around him. The Bills hope for the same result and he can learn under AJ McCarron.

1. **Washington Redskins - Vita Vea, DT, Washington**

The Redskins need to add talent to their front seven on defense starting with the defensive line. Vea and Alabama's Da'Ron Payne are the best defensive tackles in this draft. Washington ranked last in the league in 2017 in run defense, allowing 134.1 yards per game. The 6-4, 346-pound Vea is a freakish talent who is more than a run-stopper. He has rare quickness for a player of his size and can play all three downs.

1. **Green Bay Packers - Marcus Davenport, DE, UT San Antonio**

The Packers really need to improve their front seven and get younger. Mathews is on the other side of his career with his production declining and they need to develop more pass rushers. There really aren't many top-tier edge rushers in this class for the second half of the first round, and there's a drop-off after Davenport. He had an OK week at the Senior Bowl but didn't dominate. Davenport is a raw, quick-twitch athlete with a 6-6 frame who can develop into a premier pass rusher. He can also learn the craft from Clay Matthews in Green Bay.

1. **Arizona Cardinals – Mike Hughes, CB, Central Florida**

Arizona needs to add playmakers to their secondary with the departure of the “Honey Badger”. Hughes fills a big need opposite Patrick Peterson and he's a great punt and kick returner too. He had three touchdown returns last season. After playing at North Carolina in 2015 and a junior college in 2016, Hughes doesn't have a ton of experience, but he emerged as a shutdown corner and important player for the Knights in 2017. He will add playmaking ability to the Cardinals secondary that they need.

1. **Baltimore Ravens – Mike McGlinchey, OT, Notre Dame**

McGlinchey is the best tackle in this draft and fills a big need for the Ravens. He provides good athleticism on the edge with the feet to handle speed and the strength to sustain blocks. He can play either left or right tackle.

1. **Los Angeles Chargers - Da'Ron Payne, DT, Alabama**

Stopping the run has to be a priority for the Chargers in 2018. Their 4.9 yards per rushing attempt allowed ranked last in the league. Los Angeles has two young star edge rushers in Joey Bosa and Melvin Ingram, but it has to improve on the interior of their defense. Payne is one of the best defensive tackles in this class and really shined against top competition. The 6-2, 319-pound Payne had only three career sacks, but he consistently beat his man, even if it didn't show up on the stat sheet.

1. **Seattle Seahawks - Derwin James, S, Florida State**

The Seahawks lost a lot of playmakers in their defense last year with the departure of Michael Bennett, Sheldon Richardson and Richard Sherman. They also have questions whether Kam Chancellor and Cliff Avril will return from injuries. Their focus in this year’s draft needs to be on defense and the offensive line. In order to return to the “Legion of Boom” years they need to replenish their playmakers starting with James. He looked like a top-five pick as a freshman at Florida State in 2015, missed the entire 2016 season with a knee injury, then didn't return as the same player in 2017. He is a physical, athletic safety that fits the mode of the NFL. Medical reports and testing at the combine may turn off some teams. However, he is a tremendous talent that will provide an immediate upgrade to the back end of the defense.

1. **Dallas Cowboys - Rashaan Evans, ILB, Alabama**

The Cowboys weakness is their defense especially the front seven. Evans can play on the outside and could also be insurance for Sean Lee, who will be 32 when the 2018 season begins and has struggled with injuries in his career. Evans had 15 sacks at Alabama and is a threat as a pass-rusher on third down. He's smart and battle-tested after playing under

[Nick Saban](http://abcnews.go.com/topics/sports/ncaa/coach-nick-saban.htm). We really like this pick for the Cowboys.

1. **Detroit Lions - Derrius Guice, RB, LSU**

The Lions have been searching for a running back since Barry Sanders. Guice is a true every-down back, which Matthew Stafford has never had in his career. Ameer Abdullah averaged only 3.3 yards per carry in 2017, while Theo Riddick is more of a versatile pass-catcher. Guice had 26 rushing touchdowns over the past two seasons, and he looked every bit as good for the Tigers as Leonard Fournette did in 2016. Adding a weapon like Guice would make Detroit’s offense more balanced and Stafford more effective.

1. **Cincinnati Bengals - Kolton Miller, OT, UCLA**

The Bengals have to upgrade their offensive line in this draft due to losses in free agency over the last two years. This is a deep group of offensive tackles, and our first one is off the board at No. 12. Miller is a pure left tackle with a 6-8 frame and great feet. He reminds us of former Patriots left tackle Nate Solder. Last offseason, the Bengals let longtime left tackle Andrew Whitworth walk, and former first-round pick Cedric Ogbuehi took his spot. Whitworth had an All-Pro season with the Rams, but Ogbuehi struggled. He might be better with a move inside to guard. Picking Miller here gives Cincinnati an upgrade, though he needs to get stronger.

1. **Buffalo Bills - James Daniels, C/G, Iowa**

The retirement of Eric Wood opens up a void at center in Buffalo and the retirement of Richie Incognito makes interior offensive line a priority for the Bills. The Bills could get the top prospect at a real position of need. Daniels is No. 1 center in this draft. At 6-4, 296, he can move his feet and get to the second level as a true athlete. He is perfect as an anchor for today's NFL. The Bills upgrade their interior offensive line with the selection of Daniels. He provides tremendous flexibility with his ability to play center or guard.

1. **New England Patriots – Lamar Jackson, QB, Louisville**

The Patriots need to find an answer after Tom Brady. They traded away Jimmy Garapolo last year so there is still a need for a long term answer at quarterback. Jackson is one of the most intriguing prospects in the year’s draft. He is one of the most athletic quarterbacks to come out in the last 10 years. However, accuracy and anticipation are the question marks. He completed 57% of his passes in college and he will need to improve upon that at the NFL level. If the Patriots can figure out a way to take advantage of his athleticism while also improving his accuracy and anticipation, they may have a long term answer. Also, the ability to learn from Brady will be a plus.

1. **Carolina Panthers – Courtland Sutton, WR, SMU**

The Panthers need to add playmakers for Cam Newton. When [Cam Newton](http://abcnews.go.com/topics/sports/football/cam-newton-newton-football.htm) was league MVP in 2015, he had a deep threat in Ted Ginn Jr. who could take the top off defenses and he had several other playmakers. Sutton fits the mold of Panthers wide receivers. He is a big target at 6’4” and has the speed to separate. Sutton has good hands, height, body control and leaping ability. He is a dangerous red zone threat. He was extremely productive in college catching 68 balls for 1,085 yards and 12 touchdowns.

1. **Tennessee Titans – Sony Michel, RB, Georgia**

Tennessee parted ways with DeMarco Murray, which means Derrick Henry becomes the primary back. New offensive coordinator Matt LaFleur spent time with the Falcons (2015-16) and Rams (2017), who both used their backs a lot in the passing game, and Michel could be a complementary back that helps there. Michel is often compared to Alvin Kamara who had tremendous success in the NFL last year for the Saints. He fits the “new” NFL offense and can beat you through the air and ground. He is the “jack of all trades” running back in this draft. He is a tremendous all-purpose running back that can beat you through the air and ground. You will be able to move him around the offensive formation to cause matchup problems. The Titans could also look to upgrade the interior of their offensive line.

1. **Atlanta Falcons - Isaiah Wynn, G, Georgia**

Wynn is another prospect who helped himself at the Senior Bowl. He was one of the best offensive linemen there, and he neutralized pass-rushers on almost every one-on-one rep. Wynn played guard and tackle for the Bulldogs, but at 6-2, 308 he is best suited for guard at the next level. By picking Wynn, Atlanta could upgrade on Wes Schweitzer on the right side or move on from Andy Levitre on the left side.

1. **New Orleans Saints - Hayden Hurst, TE, South Carolina**

Hurst should be the first tight end off the board and the Saints have been missing a big play tight end since Jimmy Graham. Hurst is a well-rounded tight end who didn't get a ton of targets in the South Carolina offense. Hurst spent a couple of years playing minor league baseball and he will be 25 when he plays his first NFL game. New Orleans brought in Coby Fleener in 2016 to try to replace the production of Jimmy Graham, but that didn't work out and the Saints could release him this offseason. Drew Brees needs a No. 1 tight end and Hurst would add another playmaker to an already explosive offense.

1. **Pittsburgh Steelers - Leighton Vander Esch, LB, Boise State**

The Steelers will look to replace Ryan Shazier this offseason and Vander Esch would be a great replacement. At 6-4, 240, he has the versatility to play outside linebacker, but we think his best fit is as an inside 'backer in a 3-4. He's a physical run stopper who can defend tight ends and running backs. He had three interceptions in 2017.

1. **Jacksonville Jaguars - Dallas Goedert, TE, South Dakota State**

Former first-round pick Mercedes Lewis has had a great career, but he's turning 34 this year and isn't much of a receiving threat. Goedert compares favorably to athletic tight ends, such as, Todd Heap and Zach Ertz. Two guys who can catch passes and also block. Goedert has a tremendous catch radius at 6-4, 260. His speed, athleticism and leaping ability will create mismatches for NFL defenses.

1. **Minnesota Vikings – Billy Price, G, Ohio State**

The Vikings do not have many holes to fill on a championship caliber team. However, one area they need to address is offensive line, particularly the interior with the retirement of Joe Berger. Billy Price is the pick here. He provides tremendous versatility having played both guard and center. Price combines good technique with a nasty temperament to dominate interior defenders. He has above average athleticism and will provide tremendous leadership to the offensive line. If Mike McGlinchey falls to pick 30, which we do not think is likely, they will draft McGlinchey and insert him at right tackle and keep Mike Remmers at guard.

1. **New England Patriots – Josh Jackson, CB, LSU**

The Patriots need to add talent to their secondary. Jackson is one of the top corners and provided many big plays for the Iowa defense last year. Jackson has the playmaking ability that NFL teams covet. His athleticism doesn’t wow you but he has excellent instincts and ball skills. He would fit well in Belicheck’s defensive scheme.

1. **Philadelphia Eagles - Christian Kirk, WR, Texas A&M**

The Super Bowl champs are built to contend for years to come, and they don't have many immediate needs. The Eagles parted ways with Torrey Smith this offseason, which means a receiver at the end of the first round makes sense. At 5-11, Kirk isn't a big target, but he can be a weapon in the slot and in the return game. The Eagles adding more playmakers on offense will provide them more balance. A running back with this pick is an option too.

**Minnesota Vikings Draft**

The Vikings needs going into the 2018 draft include in priority order:

* Offensive Line
* Defensive Tackle
* Tight End
* Running Back
* Cornerback/Safety

The Vikings had the number one defense in the NFL last year but need to add playmakers to the offense and improve the line play to both run and protect.

In terms of the Vikings, they will be able to take the best player in the draft due to the fact they have a very good returning team and have very few holes to fill. We see three alternatives that could unfold in the first round:

1. Take the best Guard/Tackle – Continuing to build the youth and depth on the offensive line will be a priority for the Vikings in Round 1. The Vikings made great strides in improving the offensive line last year but need to do more. Options in Round 1 could include: Billy Price, G, Ohio State, Isiah Wynn, G, Georgia, James Daniels, G/C, Iowa and Mike McGlinchey, T, Notre Dame. If McGlinchey is there at pick 30, the Vikings will take him. He is the best tackle in this draft and they could immediately insert him at right tackle. Price offers tremendous versatility and is a tenacious blocker. He would fit in nicely next to former Ohio State lineman Pat Eflien who the Vikings drafted in the third round last year. Wynn has played guard, center and tackle in college. He provides versatility but his best position is guard in the NFL. Daniels fits best in a zone blocking scheme and has excellent athleticism to get to the second level. The goal should be to add a starter in round 1. We think it is likely for the Vikings to look to add a starter in round 1 or 2 in the interior of the offensive line.
2. Take the best Defensive Tackle – One of the strongest units on the defense was the defensive line last year. However, Shariff Floyd’s knee injury and the fact that both Shamar Stephen and Tom Johnson left in free agency leaves depth issues on the interior of the defensive line. The Vikings did add Sheldon Richardson but it was only a one year deal. They will add interior defensive line depth in the first four rounds of this year’s draft. All of these factors will affect the Vikings decision making at the defensive tackle position in this year’s draft. Options in round 1 include: Vita Vea, Washington, Da’Ron Payne, Alabama, Harrison Phillips, Stanford, Taven Bryan, Florida and Maurice Hurst, Michigan. It is likely that both Vea and Payne will be off the board at pick 30. Leaving the Vikings to choose between Phillips, Bryan and Hurst. We do not think the Vikings will select Hurst due to his heart condition and Bryan does not fit our scheme well. The Vikings will consider Phillips due to his tremendous production in college but will probably wait to address defensive tackle in later rounds.
3. Take the Best Cornerback – Adding depth at cornerback and a playmaker that can play nickel corner is a priority. They already have two starters in Rhodes and Waynes but will look to add talent to the group. Options in the first round include: Denzel Ward, Ohio State, Jaire Alexander, Louisville, Mike Hughes, Central Florida, Josh Jackson, Iowa and Donte Jackson, LSU. We think it is likely that both Ward and Hughes will be off the board by pick 30 leaving them with Alexander and the two Jacksons to choose from. If Mike Hughes falls to pick 30, the Vikings will take a strong look at him. He provides excellent cover shills and can play the slot. He also is an excellent return guy. Alexander is also a prospect the Vikings are interested in. He was very productive at Louisville and had the best combine performance of any corner in the 2018 draft running an impressive 4.38 40 yard dash. He is a fast athletic corner that can cover all rotes in the NFL route tree. The Vikings are likely to address the cornerback position in the first two rounds of the draft. Terrence Newman is not likely to return at age 40 and the Vikings still have concerns with Mackenzie Alexander’s ability to man the nickel corner position. Adding depth to this group will be a priority.

It is possible that the Vikings will trade back and garner more picks. However, we think they will stay at pick 30 and either address the interior of the offensive line, defensive tackle or cornerback. We think the choices will come down to Billy Price, G, Ohio State, Harrison Phillips, DT, Stanford, Mike Hughes, CB, Central Florida and Jaire Alexander, CB, Louisville. Our pick in the first round is Billy Price, G, Ohio State. Price provides value in the first round and immediately fills a need due to the departure of Joe Berger. He would pair with former Ohio State Buckeye teammate, Pat Eflien, to provide a formidable interior offensive line for years to come.

They will then target defensive tackle, tight end, corner/safety and running back in round 2 and beyond.

This draft will continue to infuse young talent on both sides of the ball for the Vikings. They have one of the youngest teams in the NFL and they will continue to build young talent. This is a pick that fills a need while at the same time fits into the best-athlete-available mantra the Vikings have maintained. If they choose an Offensive Lineman with their first round pick, the Vikings will then look to add a cornerback or tight end in the second round of the draft.

**ROUND TWO - Options in round 2 that the Vikings could draft:**

They will look to add a playmaking tight end, safety/corner, offensive line or defensive line depending on what they do in round 1:

1. **Donte Jackson, CB, LSU -** Jackson ran one of the fastest 40 times at the combine and illustrated his ability to run with the NFL's deep-threat receivers. With his elite speed and agility, Jackson is able to run the route to prevent separation and make up ground with superb recovery speed. Jackson doesn't have ideal size, but he is extremely fast, however, so he will be a good corner to line up against speed receivers. He is athletic to run the route and prevent separation. He would be excellent in the slot.
2. **Isaiah Oliver, CB, Colorado -** Oliver had a strong combine performance with a good 40 time and an impressive showing in the field work. Oliver has size, length, and movement skills. He played man coverage in college and would fit into Zimmer’s scheme. Oliver totaled 13 passes broken up, two interceptions and 25 tackles in 2017.
3. **Frank Ragnow, G/C, Arkansas –** If the Vikings do not draft an offensive lineman with their first round pick, Ragnow could be the pick in round 2. The Vikings are high on Ragnow who played high school football in Minnesota. Ragnow played well for Arkansas in 2017 before a high ankle sprain ended his season early. The injury required surgery, but Ragnow should be ready for the start of the 2018 season. Over the past two seasons, he hasn't allowed a single sack while taking on excellent competition. As one can expect coming from Arkansas, Ragnow is also a tough run blocker. He is a technician who enters his senior year having made 26 straight starts. As a sophomore, Ragnow was the Razorbacks starter at right guard. He has the size to be a guard or center in the NFL.
4. **Justin Reid, S, Stanford** - Reid played really well for a lot of 2017, impressing NFL scouts. Reid does not have Earl Thomas-like range as a free safety or Kam Chancellor-like size as a strong safety, but he does everything well. Reid is a good free or strong safety with the ability to run and tackle. He is a good all-around safety similar to HaHa Clinton-Dix coming out of Alabama. In 2017, Reid notched 99 tackles with six passes broken up and five interceptions. Stanford also used Reid as a slot cornerback in some games last year. He is a well-rounded safety that provides position flexibility for Zimmer’s defense.
5. **Tim Settle, DT, Virginia Tech -** Settle put together a strong 2017 season and was one of the better defenders on a tough Virginia Tech defense. The big nose tackle totaled 36 tackles with 12.5 tackles for a loss, four sacks and one pass batted for the year. That was a big improvement over his 2016 season when he had 17 tackles and no sacks. The physical defender is probably more likely to be a second-day pick in the 2018 NFL Draft, given how nose tackles are downgraded.
6. **Harrison Phillips, DT, Stanford –** If the Stanford defensive tackle lasts until the Vikings second round pick, the Vikings will take a strong look at him. Phillips turned himself into a NFL prospect with a tremendous senior season. He had 103 tackles with 17 tackles for a loss, 7.5 sacks and two forced fumbles for the year. The tape does not lie and Phillips had tremendous productivity in 2017.
7. **Austin Corbett, G, Nevada** – Corbett was a first team All-Mountain west performer that developed into a 4 year starter at tackle and team captain after walking onto Nevada’s program. The 6’4” 305 pound blocker is projected as a guard due to his body type, although, his versatility is an asset. He is very intelligent and plays with a tenacious attitude.
8. **Arden Key, DE, LSU** – Another LSU defensive end in the mold of Danielle Hunter: long, athletic, fast and strong (freak athlete). He is one of the elite talents of this draft but off field concerns may hurt his draft stock. Key could be worth the gamble as he could be the best pass rusher in this class. Zimmer and his assistants will get the best out of players like Key.
9. **Lorenzo Carter, DE/OLB, Georgia** – Carter is a big edge defender with outstanding speed. He had an excellent combine running a 4.5 40 yard dash at 6’5” and 250 pounds. Carter is exactly the type of athlete Zimmer likes to put in his defense to pressure the quarterback. In 2017, Carter had 57 tackles with 4.5 sacks, three forced fumbles and 7.5 tackles for loss. Carter has a nice skill set with speed, athleticism and length.
10. **Mark Andrews, TE, Oklahoma** – Andrews is an excellent athlete with quickness and is a dangerous receiver down the seam. His size speed ratio at 6’5”, 256 pounds and a 4.67 40 are what teams covet in today’s NFL tight end. He may not last this long but should receive serious consideration in the third round. In 2017, he caught 62 passes for 958 yards and 8 touchdowns.

If the Vikings select a cornerback or defensive tackle in round 1, they will select Frank Ragnow, G, Arkansas in Round 2. If they select an offensive lineman in round 1, they will select Isiah Oliver, CB, Colorado in Round 2. Also, don’t be surprised if the Vikings draft Mark Andrews in round 2 to pair with Kyle Rudolph in two tight end sets. DeFilippo’s offensive approach employs a lot of two tight end sets that provide the quarterback multiple options to attack a defense.

**ROUND THREE - Options in round 3 that the Vikings could draft – this is where you start to build your team:**

1. **Nyheim Hines, RB, North Carolina State –** Hines is the most explosive running back in this draft and had a tremendous combine running a 4.38 40 solidifying his position as the most explosive running back in the draft. He fits the “new” NFL offense and can beat you through the air and ground. He is the “jack of all trades” running back in this draft. He is a tremendous all-purpose running back that can beat you through the air and ground. Hines caught 84 balls as a slot receiver in his college career. You will be able to move him around the offensive formation to cause matchup problems. Hines would be a great replacement for Jerrick McKinnon who the Vikings lost to San Francisco in free agency.
2. **Kerryon Johnson, RB, Auburn -** Johnson has good size and athleticism. He was Auburn’s workhouse. He played excellent against top competition and can beat you both running and receiving which is critical in today’s NFL offenses. In 2017, Johnson was very productive for Auburn averaging 4.9 yards a carry for 1,391 yards and 18 touchdowns.
3. **Mike Gesicki, TE, Penn State** - He was the most athletic tight end at the combine finishing first in most categories with an impressive 4.54 40 yard dash. Gesicki is a receiving tight end that will create mismatch problems in the NFL. Gesicki runs well down the seam with speed to get vertical. He will need to improve his blocking in order to become a complete tight end. With his quickness, size and leaping ability, Gesicki is a dangerous red zone weapon for the NFL. In 2017, Gesicki totaled 57 receptions for 563 yards and 9 touchdowns.
4. **R.J. McIntosh, DT, Miami -** McIntosh is a pure three technique defensive tackle, which is a Vikings need. He had an impressive 2017season and caused disruption for Miami at the point of attack. He totaled 52 tackles with 12.5 tackles for loss, 2,5 sacks, seven passes broken up and one forced fumble. McIntosh has scheme flexibility with the ability to play tackle in a 4-3 and serve as an end in a 3-4.
5. **Rasheem Green, DT, USC** – Green had an impressive combine running a 4.73 40 yard dash as a defensive tackle. In 2017, he played well for the Trojans recording 43 tackles with 12.5 tackles for loss, 10 sacks, one forced fumble and four passes broken up. Green has good instincts and play recognition with tremendous athleticism.
6. **Nathan Shepherd, DT, Fort Hays State -** Shepherd was one of the Division II products who did well enough to earn a Senior Bowl invitation. He was tremendously productive at the Division II level and dominated the competition. In Mobile, he held his own before getting injured. In 2017, Shepherd totaled 38 tackles with 12.5 for a loss and four sacks. He had 61 tackles with three sacks in 2016 and 69 tackles with three sacks in 2015. Shepherd could play tackle in a 4-3 and or five-technique defensive end in a 3-4 defense. At the combine, Shepherd had a solid workout and solidified his position in the draft.
7. **Alex Cappa, T, Humboldt State -** Coming from a Division II school, Cappa did well enough to earn an invitation to the Senior Bowl. He had a respectable week in Mobile, where he showed some developmental potential for the NFL against the increased competition. Given the weak tackle class and the fact that he has the size to play tackle in the NFL, Cappa has a good opportunity to be drafted.
8. **Dante Pettis, WR, Washington -** Pettis played well in 2017 with 62 receptions for 721 yards and seven touchdowns. He also passed DeSean Jackson to be the Pac-12's all-time leader in punt returns for a touchdown with nine. Pettis is a smooth receiver who is fluid, fast, quick handed, and dangerous after the catch. Pettis was the Huskies' No. 2 receiver to John Ross in 2016 and was a solid contributor. Pettis totaled 53 receptions for 822 yards with 15 touchdowns for Washington. Pettis has quickness and looks like he could be a solid complementary receiver in the NFL.

We like Hines in the third round for the Vikings. He would be a great replacement for Jerrick McKinnon

**ROUND FOUR – The Vikings do not have a pick in round 4 in this year’s draft.**

**ROUNDS 5-7: Options for Vikings in Rounds 5-7:**

The following players are options for the Vikings in rounds 5-7:

1. Braxton Berrios, WR, Miami
2. Jeff Badet, WR, Oklahoma
3. Jake Wieneke, WR, South Dakota State
4. Kemoko Turay, LB, Rutgers
5. Matt Gono, T, Wesley
6. P.J. Hall, DT, Sam Houston State
7. Davontae Harris, CB, Illinois State
8. Jack Cichy, LB, Wisconsin
9. Holton Hill, CB, Texas
10. B.J. Hill, DT, North Carolina State
11. Troy Fumagalli, TE, Wisconsin
12. Ian Thomas, TE, Indiana
13. Jullian Taylor, DT, Temple

Sleepers:

1. Jordan Whitehead, S, Pittsburgh
2. Dane Cruikshank, CB, Arizona
3. John Kelly, RB, Tennessee
4. Michael Gallup, WR Colorado
5. Isaac Yiadom, CB, Boston College
6. Folorunso Fatukasi, DT, Connecticut
7. Akrum Wadley, RB, Iowa
8. Marquis Hayes, OLB, Ole Miss
9. Cedric Wilson, WR, Boise State
10. Jordan Thomas, TE, Mississippi State
11. Kyle Lauletta, QB, Richmond
12. Cole Madison, G, Washington State
13. Logan Woodside, QB, Toledo
14. DJ Reed, CB, Kansas State
15. Hercules Mata’afa, OLB, Washington State

The Vikings have picks in every round this year except for the fourth round and have 8 total picks. They can fill depth needs in several areas in this draft and obtain a starting offensive lineman. Most notably, the Vikings needs are:

* Offensive Line
* Tight End
* Running Back
* Cornerback/Safety
* Depth at Defensive Tackle

We will update our readers with a post-draft report after the draft.

Mink and Obey from Dallas!