The Mink and Cousin Obie will be watching the NFL draft at home in Naples this year. 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 more difficult to predict due to the fact they did not have a combine and teams were not allowed to do in person visits with prospects.

This draft is again one of the deepest drafts in recent memory due to a large number of juniors declaring for the draft with 98 juniors/underclassmen declaring for the 2021 NFL draft. This is not as many as last year’s record number but will significantly add to the depth of this year’s draft. Each year more and more juniors/underclassmen 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 quarterback, wide receiver, offensive line, and cornerbacks. 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, particularly at the offensive line position, due to the depth of this draft.

We do expect some movement in the first 15 picks of the draft as teams’ position to draft one of the top 5 quarterbacks in this draft. The quarterback position has five blue chip prospects with starter level talent in later rounds. We expect six quarterbacks to go in the first round with five selected within the first 10 picks.

The strengths of the 2021 draft include:

1. Top Quarterbacks – This is a deep draft of top quarterbacks as we could have 6 quarterbacks taken in the first round with 5 quarterbacks chosen in the top 10 picks. The 5 quarterbacks that will be taken in the first 10 picks include: Trevor Lawrence, Clemson, Zach Wilson, BYU, Mac Jones, Alabama, Trey Lance, NDSU and Justin Fields, Ohio State. Lawrence may be the best quarterback prospect since Peyton Manning and Andrew Luck. He is extremely athletic with excellent leadership skills. He has a big arm and he can make all the throws at the next level. Wilson had a 95.5 passing grade in 2020 which was the highest in the country. His off-platform arm talent and special throws make him an elite quarterback prospect. His style of play will remind some of Patrick Mahomes. Jones produced the second highest grade in college football last season at 94.8. He is an extremely accurate quarterback with underrated athleticism. His skills and intangibles should translate well to the next level. Lance may have the highest upside of any quarterback in this draft but he played against inferior competition and he only started 17 games in college, all against FCS competition. However, his physical traits are outstanding and he does an excellent job taking care the football and making game changing plays. Fields earned his second consecutive passing grade over 92.0 in 2020 and had several games where he underperformed. However, his athletic ability, including 4.43 speed, and accurate arm will open up the playbook for whoever drafts him. The next tire of quarterbacks include: Kyle Trask, Florida, Davis Mills, Stanford, Kellen Mond, Texas A&M, Jamie Newman, Georgia.
2. Wide Receiver – The draft continues to provide deep talent at the wide receiver position. This draft is similar to the talent in the 2014 and 2020 drafts. This position alone will dominate the first four rounds of the 2021 NFL draft. This draft will provide value at the wide receiver position in all seven rounds. Teams will find starting caliber wide receivers in the 4th and 5th round of this draft. We project 6 receivers going in the first round with another 7-8 going in the second and early third round. The top receivers in this draft include Ja'Marr Chase, LSU, DaVonta Smith, Alabama, Jaylon Waddle, Alabama, Elijah Moore, Ole Miss, Terrance Marshall, LSU and Rashod Bateman, Minnesota. We project that all of these receivers will be picked in the first round. Chase is the cream of the crop who should reunite with Burrow in Cincinnati. Chase opted out in 2020 but his 2019 season was one of the best by a wide receiver in College Football history. He had 24 deep catches that year and help lead LSU to a National Championship. Chase is a physical freak that will be a matchup nightmare at the next level. Smith won the Heisman and the National Championship. His performance in the National Championship game demonstrates Smith’s game changing ability. He ranked in the top five in yards per route run against press coverage in both 2019 and 2020. Waddle generated more yards per route run than any player in this class. He is also a dangerous kick returner. Moore hauled in 73% of his contested catch opportunities this past season during his 1,193 yard campaign. He is very tough and an extremely good slot receiver. Marshall took over for Justin Jefferson this past year and his production exploded. He has an excellent catch radius and has produced 23 touchdowns on 94 catches over the past two seasons. Bateman is an excellent route runner and his speed and athleticism will translate well to the next level. He was one of the highest graded wide receivers as a sophomore and led the nation in yards per route run from an outside alignment. The next tier is very close in talent including Rondale Moore, Purdue, Kadarius Toney, Florida, Daymi Brown, North Carolina and Josh Palmer, Tennessee. This class is not as deep as last years class but it is very close.
3. Offensive Line – This is a talented group of offensive tackles with several blue-chip prospects that will be selected in the first 15 picks. This year’s draft class is deep with talent that will allow teams to bolster their offensive lines in the first three rounds of the draft. We project that 4 offensive tackles to go in the first round including: Penei Sewell, Oregon, Rashawn Slater, Northwestern, Christian Darrisaw, Virginia Tech, Teven Jenkins, Oklahoma State. This draft has three blue chip tackles and depth where you can get starters in rounds 2-4. Sewell is extremely athletic and is the best of the group. He will be a plug and play left tackle for the next 10 years. Slater was an outstanding tackle at Northwestern in 2019 before he opted out in 2020. He allowed only five pressures and earned 90.0 overall grade across 355 pass-blocking snaps. Darrisaw was the highest rated offensive tackle in the Power 5 conferences in 2020. He allowed only six pressures the entire season and did not allow a single sack or hit. Jenkins is an absolute mauler in the run game and only allowed 11 pressures on 623 blocking snaps over the past two seasons. The second tier of offensive tackles will be gone by the end of the second round. These prospects include: Dillon Radunz, NDSU, Samuel Cosmi, Texas, Alex Leatherwood, Alabama, Jackson Carman, Clemson, Liam Eichenberg, Notre Dame and Jaylon Mayfield, Michigan. This draft also includes a versatile guard that will be drafted in the first round – Alijah Vera Tucker, G, USC. Vera-Tucker put up the highest pass blocking grade on true pass sets of any lineman over the past two years and he did it between guard and tackle.
4. Cornerback – This is a deep cornerback class with several blue chip prospects. We project that four cornerbacks will be chosen in the first round including Patrick Surtain II, Alabama, Jaycee Horn, South Carolina, Greg Newsome, Northwestern and Caleb Farley, Virginia Tech. However, there are several later round prospects that will play at a high level and improve the secondary play of many NFL teams. The cream of the crop is Patrick Surtain II, Alabama. Surtain was the highest rated cornerback in college football this past season. He provides significant experience having played 662 press coverage snaps over the past two years and he brings successful lineage as his father played cornerback in the NFL. Horn is the best press-man cornerback in this draft class. He allowed only eight catches from 24 targets in the SEC last year. He provides excellent coverage skills combined with above average athleticism. Newsome is a big draft riser and he has got the best feet of any corner in the draft. His versatility allows him to plug into any scheme in the league. He allowed 12 catches on 34 targets for 93 yards in 223 coverage snaps. Farley had recent back surgery which is holding him back. However, the last time we saw him in 2019, he earned a 90.5 coverage grade and allowed a passer rating of only 26.8. He has got elite closing speed downfield and can easily affect the catch point at 6’2”, 207 pounds. The second tier of cornerbacks include: Asante Samuel Jr., Florida State, Aaron Robinson, UCF, Kelvin Joseph, Kentucky, Tay Gowan, UCF, Ifeatu Melifonwu, Syracuse, Eric Stokes, Georgia. These corners will be drafted in the second round.

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 Quarterback, Wide Receiver, Offensive Line and Cornerback. We see these positions dominating the first 3 rounds of the 2021 draft. Wide Receiver and Offensive Line are particularly deep in this draft. As always, the quarterbacks that go in the first 15 picks will result in blue chip talent dropping later in the first round.

We see the first round going like this:

1. [**Jacksonville Jaguars**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/jax/jacksonville-jaguars)**:** [**Trevor Lawrence**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104734)**, QB, Clemson** - With a depleted roster and in the beginning stages of a rebuild, new Jaguars coach Urban Meyer and general manager Trent Baalke have a chance to start fresh, take one of the highest graded quarterbacks ever and build around him. Lawrence may be the best quarterback prospect since Peyton Manning and Andrew Luck. He is extremely athletic with excellent leadership skills. He has a big arm and he can make all the throws at the next level. Lawrence is a no-brainer as the top signal-caller in this class.
2. [**New York Jets**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/nyj/new-york-jets)**:** [**Zach Wilson**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104933)**, QB, BYU** – The Jets clearly need a quarterback after trading Sam Darnold. Wilson had a 95.5 passing grade in 2020 which was the highest in the country. His off-platform arm talent and special throws make him an elite quarterback prospect. His style of play will remind some of Patrick Mahomes. He can be a star with the right talent around him, but the Jets have to add another pass-catcher at some point, even after adding [Corey Davis](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3042778/corey-davis) and [Keelan Cole Sr.](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3071572/keelan-cole-sr) in free agency.
3. [**San Francisco 49ers**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/sf/san-francisco-49ers)**:** [**Mac Jones**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104935)**, QB, Alabama** - Every sign two weeks out from the draft points to general manager John Lynch and coach Kyle Shanahan being infatuated with Jones. Jones produced the second highest grade in college football last season at 94.8. He is an extremely accurate quarterback with underrated athleticism. His skills and intangibles should translate well to the next level. Lynch and Shanahan are obviously taking the long view here, and this decision is going to be discussed and debated for years.
4. **Atlanta Falcons: Kyle Pitts, TE, Florida** - We know the Falcons have talked to other teams about [moving out of the No. 4 spot](https://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/31203167/atlanta-falcons-open-trading-no-4-overall-draft-pick-source-says), and they could be open to the highest bidder. However, we think they will stay at number 4 and pick the offensive unicorn of this draft who possesses a unique set of skills that will make him a matchup nightmare at the next level. Pitts is the ultimate weapon in this class and adding him to an offense with Julio Jones and Calvin Ridley will make Atlanta’s offense extremely explosive. Matt Ryan will be able to spread the ball around and be positioned to have one of his better years in the latter part of his career.
5. [**Cincinnati Bengals**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/cin/cincinnati-bengals)**:** [**Ja'Marr Chase**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104737)**, WR, LSU** – This pick is based off both talent and chemistry with last year’s number one pick, Joe Burrow. The 2019 Biletnikoff Award winner led the country that season with 1,780 receiving yards and 20 touchdown catches, and he would instantly be the Bengal’s top receiver on a depth chart. Chase opted out in 2020 but his 2019 season was one of the best by a wide receiver in College Football history. He had 24 deep catches that year and help lead LSU to a National Championship. Chase is a physical freak that will be a matchup nightmare at the next level. This pick reunites Burrow with Chase, who was his number one receiver at LSU when they won the National Championship. He will make an impact similar to Justin Jefferson with the Vikings last year. Chase is great at making contested catches and can break tackles and run after the catch.
6. **Miami Dolphins:** [**Penei Sewell**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104735)**, OT, Oregon** – Miami was a playoff team last year with a young team. One area they need to improve is along the offensive line. The best player on the board at this point is Penei Sewell from Oregon. Sewell is extremely athletic and is the best tackle in this draft class. He will be a plug and play left tackle for the next 10 years and those do not come around very often.
7. [**Detroit Lions**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/det/detroit-lions)**:** [**DeVonta Smith**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104741)**, WR, Alabama** – After trading for Jared Goff, Detroit needs to add playmakers, particularly after losing [Kenny Golladay](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/2974858/kenny-golladay) in free agency. Smith is a stellar route runner who just gets open. Smith won the Heisman and the National Championship. His performance in the National Championship game demonstrates Smith’s game changing ability. He ranked in the top five in yards per route run against press coverage in both 2019 and 2020. This will provide Jarod Goff with a legitimate #1 wideout which is a critical need for the Lions.
8. [**Carolina Panthers**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/car/carolina-panthers)**:** [**Micah Parsons**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104738)**, LB, Penn State** – The Panthers traded for Sam Darnold so they will not be selecting a quarterback with this pick. The Panthers focus for this pick will be defense as the defense must get some help. Parsons would be an upgrade at inside linebacker. He could also rush the passer on third downs. He's the best off-ball 'backer in this class.
9. [**Denver Broncos**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/den/denver-broncos)**:** [**Trey Lance**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104742)**, QB, North Dakota State** – The Broncos have made it clear that they want to add talent at the quarterback position. Lance may have the highest upside of any quarterback in this draft but he played against inferior competition and he only started 17 games in college, all against FCS competition. However, his physical traits are outstanding and he does an excellent job taking care the football and making game changing plays. The Broncos can let him sit behind Drew Lock for at least a season. And here's a list Lance will join (courtesy of ESPN Stats & Information): Since the 2006 draft, six quarterbacks with fewer than 20 college starts have been taken in the first round: [Mitchell Trubisky](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3039707/mitchell-trubisky) (13), [Cam Newton](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/13994/cam-newton) (14), [Dwayne Haskins Jr](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/4040616/dwayne-haskins-jr). (14), [Mark Sanchez](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/stats/_/id/12482/mark-sanchez) (16), [Kyler Murray](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3917315/kyler-murray) (17) and [Ryan Tannehill](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/14876/ryan-tannehill) (19). There is some risk involved in picking a young, unproven quarterback this high.
10. **Projected trade: New England gets its quarterback –** We rarely pick trades but this one is too obvious. If one of the top 5 quarterbacks is there at #10, New England will trade with Dallas to get their quarterback of the future. The Patriots jump five spots with the Cowboys, giving Dallas their 2022 first-round pick in return. The Cowboys do not need a quarterback, so they would be thrilled to get an offer like this and move down only a few spots, because their biggest holes are on defense and they can get a good player at No. 15. This would be the first time in the common draft era (since 1967) that five quarterbacks went in the top 10 picks. The quickest that five QBs were picked was in 1999, when [five went in the top 12](https://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/26581511/yep-1999-nfl-draft-was-just-crazy-thought). With this pick, the [New England Patriots](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/ne/new-england-patriots) (via mock trade with [DAL](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/dal/dallas-cowboys)) select [**Justin Fields**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104739)**, QB, Ohio State.** This makes five quarterbacks in the top 10, with Bill Belichick & Co. making the move up for Fields who is the second ranked quarterback on many draft boards. [Cam Newton](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/13994/cam-newton) is not the long-term answer in New England. Fields earned his second consecutive passing grade over 92.0 in 2020 and had several games where he underperformed. However, his athletic ability, including 4.43 speed, and accurate arm will open up the playbook for Josh McDaniels. Fields had an up-and-down 2020 season, but he can be a star if he becomes more consistent. Working with offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels will allow Fields to transition his talents to the next level.
11. [**New York Giants**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/nyg/new-york-giants)**:** [**Jaylen Waddle**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104744)**, WR, Alabama** - This is an important season for quarterback [Daniel Jones](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3917792/daniel-jones) in New York. In order for Jones to make a significant leap in year 3, the Giants need to surround Jones with better pass-catchers. That started with the Giants adding top wideout [Kenny Golladay](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/2974858/kenny-golladay) in free agency and Waddle would give them the draft's best deep threat, a speedy playmaker who will also make an impact in the return game. Waddle generated more yards per route run than any player in this class.
12. [**Philadelphia Eagles**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/phi/philadelphia-eagles)**:** [**Patrick Surtain II**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104736)**, CB, Alabama** - The Eagles have many needs including wide receiver, cornerback and offensive line. They could go many routes with this pick but we believe they will upgrade the cornerback position. Surtain is the most fundamentally sound defensive back in this class. Surtain was the highest rated cornerback in college football this past season. He provides significant experience having played 662 press coverage snaps over the past two years. Surtain’s father also had a successful NFL career.
13. [**Los Angeles Chargers**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/lac/los-angeles-chargers)**:** [**Rashawn Slater**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104761)**, OT/G, Northwestern** - Protecting [Justin Herbert](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/4038941/justin-herbert) has been the theme of the Chargers' offseason, with general manager Tom Telesco spending in free agency on center [Corey Linsley](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/16864/corey-linsley) and tackle/guard [Matt Feiler](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/17404/matt-feiler). They also lost out to the Chiefs in the Orlando Brown sweepstakes. So let us continue that theme with Slater, who played both tackle spots in college. Slater was an outstanding tackle at Northwestern in 2019 before he opted out in 2020. He allowed only five pressures and earned 90.0 overall grade across 355 pass-blocking snaps. This pick could be a steal for L.A. and fills a significant need for the Chargers. Slater is likely to become Northwestern's first Round 1 pick since [Luis Castillo](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/stats/_/id/8443/luis-castillo), who also was drafted by the Chargers (No. 28 in 2005).
14. [**Minnesota Vikings**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/min/minnesota-vikings)**:** [**Christian Darrisaw**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/105134)**, OT, Virginia Tech** – The Vikings will either draft an offensive lineman or an edge rusher with this pick. Offensive line is a glaring hole for the Vikings and they also lost Riley Rieff in free agency, who had a great year in 2020. Darrisaw was outstanding at left tackle for the Hokies last season. He was the highest rated offensive tackle out of the Power 5 conferences in 2020. He allowed only six pressures the entire season and did not allow a single sack or hit. This would be welcome news for Kirk Cousins who was the most pressured quarterback in the NFL last year. This pick fills a significant need for the Vikings and he will start at left tackle on Day 1 for the Vikings.
15. [**Dallas Cowboys**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/dal/dallas-cowboys)**(via mock trade with**[**NE**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/dal/dallas-cowboys)**):** [**Jaycee Horn**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104938)**, CB, South Carolina** - Dallas trades back five spots with New England, gains what would likely be a 2022 first-round pick and is able to plug a need at No. 15. The Cowboys' defense was dreadful last season, and they lost starting corner [Chidobe Awuzie](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3052101/chidobe-awuzie) in free agency. They can pair Horn with 2020 second-round pick [Trevon Diggs](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/4040966/trevon-diggs), who had a nice rookie season. Horn is the best press-man cornerback in this draft class. He allowed only eight catches from 24 targets in the SEC last year. He provides excellent coverage skills combined with above average athleticism.
16. [**Arizona Cardinals**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/ari/arizona-cardinals)**:** [**Caleb Farley**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104751)**, CB, Virginia Tech** – The Cardinals lost the leader in their secondary with the departure of Patrick Peterson in free agency. Farley is one of the top corners in this draft and would help mitigate the loss of Peterson. His medical checks could impact his draft position. He had back surgery last month -- a microdiscectomy -- and was not able to work out at his pro day, which means teams were not able to see him up close after he opted out of the 2020 season. However, the last time we saw him in 2019, he earned a 90.5 coverage grade and allowed a passer rating of only 26.8. He has got elite closing speed downfield and can easily affect the catch point at 6’2”, 207 pounds. Farley has the highest ceiling of all the defensive backs in this class.
17. [**Las Vegas Raiders**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/lv/las-vegas-raiders)**:** [**Alijah Vera-Tucker**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104771)**, OT/G, USC** - The Raiders overhauled their offensive line this offseason, trading away tackle [Trent Brown](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3043109/trent-brown), guard [Gabe Jackson](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/16753/gabe-jackson) and center [Rodney Hudson](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/14013/rodney-hudson). As a result, the offensive line will be a clear focus for the Raiders in the 2021 draft. Maybe general manager Mike Mayock and coach Jon Gruden knew they could address the offensive line in Round 1 because it is a deep class, but they still have voids to fill. Vera-Tucker is the top-ranked guard in this class, but he also provides position versatility and can play multiple positions along the line. Vera-Tucker put up the highest pass blocking grade on true pass sets of any lineman over the past two years and he did it between guard and tackle. He could play either spot for Las Vegas.
18. [**Miami Dolphins**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/mia/miami-dolphins)**:** [**Kwity Paye**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104780)**, DE, Michigan** – The selection of Paye here could start a run on edge defenders all the way into Round 2. This draft has quality edge rushers through round four but lacks high end star edge rushers. Paye is one of the top-ranked defensive end in this draft. He is a gifted athlete who put up impressive numbers at his pro day running a 4.52 at 6”2” and 261 pounds including a 35.5 vertical jump. He also had 36 reps on the bench press at 225. He did not produce significant sacks at Michigan (11.5 sacks in four seasons). Teams will bet on his potential and traits, though.
19. [**Washington Football Team**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/wsh/washington)**:** [**Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104749)**, LB, Notre Dame** - Washington could go a few different ways here, including offensive line or wide receiver. However, we like the fit of Owusu-Koramoah, though, as a three-down off-ball linebacker with cover skills. He is an extremely versatile defender. Last year with the Fighting Irish, he lined up as a slot corner at times last season due to his speed and versatility. He must improve as a tackler, but he should slot in as an instant-impact player for a defense that is already one of the league's best.
20. [**Chicago Bears**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/chi/chicago-bears)**:** [**Teven Jenkins**](https://www.espn.com/college-football/player/_/id/4038457/teven-jenkins)**, OT, Oklahoma State** - Jenkins is the last of four offensive tackles that have first-round grades and the Bears have a significant need here. Jenkins is a three-year starter at right tackle for Oklahoma State and is an absolute mauler in the run game. He also allowed only 11 pressures on 623 blocking snaps over the past two seasons. He would fill the spot created by the release of [Bobbie Massie](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/15096/bobby-massie).
21. [**Indianapolis Colts**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/ind/indianapolis-colts)**:** [**Jaelan Phillips**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/105141)**, DE, Miami** - Indianapolis should address its pass rush, even if it does bring back [Justin Houston](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/14048/justin-houston). Phillips might be the best pure pass-rusher in this class, but he needs to improve his all-around game. Phillips put it all together for the Hurricanes this season, recording 42 pressures and an 86.6 overall grade. He also has some durability concerns as he had multiple concussions at UCLA before he transferred to Miami, which means his medical checks with teams are extremely important.
22. [**Tennessee Titans**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/ten/tennessee-titans)**:** [**Elijah Moore**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/105139)**, WR, Ole Miss** – The Titans lost playmakers in free agency including Cory Davis and Jonnu Smith. They need to find Tannehill more weapons in this draft. We really like Moore's fit as [Ryan Tannehill](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/14876/ryan-tannehill)'s primary slot target. Moore hauled in 73% of his contested catch opportunities this past season during his 1,193 yard campaign. He is very tough and an extremely good slot receiver. He can be a high-volume, easy-throw target alongside [A.J. Brown](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/4047646/aj-brown), who has blossomed into a legitimate No. 1 wideout.
23. [**New York Jets**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/nyj/new-york-jets)**:** [**Greg Newsome II**](https://www.espn.com/college-football/player/_/id/4361266/greg-newsome-ii)**, CB, Northwestern** - The Jets have new leadership this year with Robert Saleh as the new coach. You can bet that Saleh wants to invest in the defensive side of the ball and is likely to go defense with this pick after selecting their quarterback with the second pick. Newsome has been a riser over the past month; his 2020 tape is phenomenal, and he had a great pro day workout. His versatility allows him to plug into any scheme in the league. He allowed 12 catches on 34 targets for 93 yards in 223 coverage snaps. He fits well with what Saleh wants in his corners. Newsome is the last of four cornerbacks who are likely to go in Round 1.
24. [**Pittsburgh Steelers**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/pit/pittsburgh-steelers)**:** [**Najee Harris**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104766)**, RB, Alabama** - The Steelers could go with an offensive lineman here, as they lost three starters from 2020. James Connor their primary running back the last few years was also lost in free agency. The Steelers main focus needs to be replenishing these losses as they return a top 10 defense. Harris would flourish in this offense and take the pressure off quarterback [Ben Roethlisberger](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/5536/ben-roethlisberger). Harris has the ability to wear down defenses and help in the short passing game. If Harris goes in Round 1, he will be the fifth Alabama running back picked in the first round since 2000. The others include: [Josh Jacobs](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/4047365/josh-jacobs) (2019), [Trent Richardson](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/13981/mark-ingram-ii) (2012), Mark Ingram (2011) and [Shaun Alexander](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/stats/_/id/2150/shaun-alexander) (2000). Notably absent is [Derrick Henry](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3043078/derrick-henry), who was a second-round pick in 2016 and somehow just had an [underrated 2,000-yard campaign](https://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/30646616/derrick-henry-surpasses-2000-rushing-yards-tennessee-titans-secure-afc-south-championship).
25. [**Jacksonville Jaguars:**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/jax/jacksonville-jaguars) [**Trevon Moehrig**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104755)**, S, TCU** – The Jaguars could go multiple ways with this pick after adding the number one quarterback in this draft. With this pick, we believe they will go defense and select the best safety on the board. Moehrig, who had 19 pass breakups over the last two seasons and won the Thorpe Award as the country's best defensive back in 2020, is not likely to be on the board in Round 2. This would be a great pick by the Jaguars.
26. [**Cleveland Browns**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/cle/cleveland-browns)**:** [**Zaven Collins**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/105138)**, OLB/DE, Tulsa** - The Browns need to continue to add playmakers to their defense. They can score points but too many times last year the defense lost the game in the fourth quarter. Collins is a versatile linebacker who was the only FBS player to have at least four sacks and four interceptions last season. He was not asked to rush the passer much, but he still got four sacks.
27. [**Baltimore Ravens**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/bal/baltimore-ravens)**:** [**Jayson Oweh**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/105249)**, OLB, Penn State** - The Ravens need to add playmakers to take full advantage of Lamar Jackson’s athleticism and versatility. We believe they can fill this need after Round 1 and they should focus on defense with this pick. With the loss of [Matthew Judon](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3961466/matthew-judon) and [Yannick Ngakoue](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3053044/yannick-ngakoue) in free agency, they should look to replace this production with Penn State edge defender [Jayson Oweh](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/105249), who has big-time upside. Oweh brings outstanding athleticism as he just ran a 4.36 40-yard dash at 257 pounds at his pro day. This type of speed and size is rare in NFL prospects. The issue is that Oweh did not have great production at Penn State as he did not have any sacks last season. However, teams will bet on his upside and he will replace the talent that the Ravens lost in free agency.
28. [**New Orleans Saints**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/no/new-orleans-saints)**:** [**Terrace Marshall Jr.**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/105140)**, WR, LSU** – After the departure of Drew Brees, the Saints need to add more playmakers for the new quarterbacks in the bayou (Jamison Winston and Taysom Hill). They need an outside wide receiver who can run every route and that is Marshall. He was extremely productive in college and continues a trend of LSU wide receivers having success in the NFL. Marshall took over for Justin Jefferson this past year and his production exploded. He has an excellent catch radius and has produced 23 touchdowns on 94 catches over the past two seasons. This wide receiver class is extremely deep and it is rare that a team is able to find a guy like him this late in Round 1.
29. [**Green Bay Packers**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/gb/green-bay-packers)**:** [**Rashod Bateman**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104740/rashod-bateman)**, WR, Minnesota** – This is a tough one for us as we do not like Gophers going to the Packers. However, the Packers really need to add a complement to Davonte Adams. The Packers have not been able to add roster improvements because they are up against the cap but they need to find ways to add playmakers on offense for [Aaron Rodgers](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/8439/aaron-rodgers) and company. Bateman is an excellent route runner and his speed and athleticism will translate well to the next level. He was one of the highest graded wide receivers as a sophomore and led the nation in yards per route run from an outside alignment. Bateman played outside and in the slot for the Golden Gophers, averaging 20.3 yards per catch in 2019. He would instantly become Green Bay's No. 2 wideout behind [Davante Adams](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/16800/davante-adams).
30. [**Buffalo Bills**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/buf/buffalo-bills)**:** [**Azeez Ojulari**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/105162)**, OLB/DE, Georgia** - With starting defensive ends [Jerry Hughes](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/13245/jerry-hughes) and [Mario Addison](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/14320/mario-addison) over the age of 30, the Bills need to get younger on the edge. They took [AJ Epenesa](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/4240585/aj-epenesa) in Round 2 last year, but that is not enough. Ojulari will provide speed and versatility to the Buffalo defense. He was extremely productive for the Bulldogs last year as he had 8.5 sacks and three forced fumbles last season. This would be a great pick for the Bills.
31. [**Kansas City Chiefs**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/kc/kansas-city-chiefs)**: Gregory Rousseau, DE, Miami** - The Super Bowl loss showed off some major weaknesses, even if this roster is still one of the league's best. The chiefs revamped their offensive line in free agency so the Chiefs will go defense with this pick and select the best edge rusher remaining in the draft. Rousseau is a tremendous athlete that brings speed and versatility to the Chiefs defense as he can play inside or outside. At 6’7” he has tremendous length which was evident in his highly productive 2019 year with the hurricanes. In 2019, he had a monster year with 54 tackles and 15.5 sacks as he grew into a game-wrecker. He sat out last year due to COVID which may impact his draft stock. However, Rousseau has tremendous upside and will really impact the Chiefs front seven.
32. [**Tampa Bay Buccaneers**](https://www.espn.com/nfl/team/_/name/tb/tampa-bay-buccaneers)**:** [**Christian Barmore**](https://insider.espn.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/104936)**, DT, Alabama** - General manager Jason Licht has done a great job putting together a great core, and the Bucs are essentially bringing back the exact same roster for 2021. That is not a terrible idea when you have just won the Super Bowl. One spot where they could get younger is defensive tackle. Barmore could replace [Ndamukong Suh](https://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/13234/ndamukong-suh) long term and play next to elite nose tackle [Vita Vea](http://www.espn.com/nfl/player/_/id/3134362/vita-vea). Barmore is an excellent 3-technique pass-rusher and is also disruptive against the run. He was a leader of that Alabama defense last year that won the National Championship.

**Minnesota Vikings Draft**

The Vikings needs going into the 2021 draft include in priority order:

* Offensive Line
* Defensive End (Edge Rusher)
* Safety
* Wide Receiver

The Vikings need to restock their defense in this draft but need to add starters along the offensive line.

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. They have more holes to fill than recent drafts, but a good draft will improve their chances of an NFC title. We see two alternatives that could unfold in the first round:

1. Take the best Offensive 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 the last three years in the draft with the drafting of O’Neil in 2017, Bradbury in 2018 and Cleveland in 2019, but we need to do more. They had an average offensive line last year with challenges in the interior of the line. Options in Round 1 could include: Rashawn Slater, Northwestern and Christian Darrisaw, Virginia Tech. They could also look at Elijah Vera Tucker, USC. If the Vikings draft one of these prospects, Ezra Cleveland will stay at guard. We believe improved offensive line play is one of the key factors to improving the Vikings chances of an NFC North title. Slater was an outstanding tackle at Northwestern in 2019 before he opted out in 2020. He allowed only five pressures and earned 90.0 overall grade across 355 pass-blocking snaps. Darrisaw was the highest rated offensive tackle in the Power 5 conferences in 2020. He allowed only six pressures the entire season and did not allow a single sack or hit. Vera-Tucker put up the highest pass blocking grade on true pass sets of any lineman over the past two years and he did it between guard and tackle. Each of these choices would fit the Vikings zone blocking scheme We expect the top four tackles – Penei Sewell, Oregon, Rashawn Slater, Northwestern and Christion Darrisaw, Virginia Tech, Elijah Vera Tucker, USC – to be gone by pick 20. The goal should be to add a starter in this draft. We think it is likely for the Vikings to look to add a starter in round 1 for the offensive line.
2. Take the best Defensive End – One of the weakest units on the defense was the defensive line last year. This was primarily due to injuries and COVID. However, an infusion of young talent is required. This position is critical in Mike Zimmer’s defense. In round one, we expect the Vikings to consider three defensive ends: Kwity Paye, Michigan, Jaelan Phillips, Miami and Gregory Rousseau, Miami. Paye has the kind of physical tools that do not come around very often. He is a gifted athlete who put up impressive numbers at his pro day running a 4.52 at 6”2” and 261 pounds including a 35.5 vertical jump. He also had 36 reps on the bench press at 225. He is a physical freak. This season we finally saw him put it all together as his 87.1 pass rushing grade suggests. Phillips might be the best pure pass-rusher in this class, but he needs to improve his all-around game. Phillips put it all together for the Hurricanes this season, recording 42 pressures and an 86.6 overall grade. Rousseau is a tremendous athlete that brings speed and versatility to a defense as he can play inside or outside. At 6’7” he has tremendous length which was evident in his highly productive 2019 year with the hurricanes. In 2019, he had a monster year with 54 tackles and 15.5 sacks as he grew into a game-wrecker. We really like Rousseau and believe he would be the best fit in Zimmer’s scheme.

The Vikings will stay at pick 14 and either address offensive line or defensive end. We think the choices will come down to the following: Rashawn Slater, T, Northwestern, Christian Darrisaw, T, Virginia Tech, Alijah Vera Tucker, G, USC, Kwity Paye, DE, Michigan, Gregory Rousseau, DE, Miami, Jaelen Phillips, DE, Miami.

***If Rashawn Slater, T, Northwestern falls to the Vikings at pick 14, they should immediately pick him. However, they may need to trade up to select Slater. The more likely scenario is they stay at 14 or trade down to acquire a second round pick. As a result, our pick at number 14 is Christian Darrisaw, T, Virginia Tech. Darrisaw is an excellent left tackle that will continue the youth movement along the offensive line over the last three years. He is a plug and play tackle that will replace Riley Reiff.***

They will then target Defensive End, Guard, Safety, Wide Receiver and Cornerback in round 3 and beyond.

This draft will continue to infuse young talent on both sides of the ball for the Vikings. They still have one of the youngest teams in the NFL and they will continue to build young talent. These picks fill needs while at the same time fits into the best-athlete-available mantra the Vikings have maintained. Based on the Vikings choice of Darrisaw in round one, the Vikings will then look to add a defensive end, guard and wide receiver in the third round of the draft.

**ROUND TWO - Options in round 2 that the Vikings could draft (If a second round pick is acquired in a trade in the first round):**

If they Vikings trade back in the first round in order to acquire a second round pick, the options for that pick include:

1. Dillon Radunz, T, North Dakota State
2. Alex Leatherwood, T, Alabama
3. Brady Christenson, G, BYU
4. Wyatt Davis, G, Ohio State
5. Carson Green, G, Texas A&M
6. Liam Eichenberg, T, Notre Dame
7. Kadarius Toney, WR, Florida
8. Rondale Moore, WR, Purdue
9. Joseph Ossai, DE, Texas
10. Carlos Basham, DE, Wake Forest
11. Davion Davis, DT, Iowa

This will obviously depend on what position was chosen in the first round.

**ROUND THREE - Options in round 3 that the Vikings could draft – this is where you start to build your team (Vikings have two picks in round 3)**

1. **Payton Turner, DE, Houston** – If the Vikings select an offensive tackle in the first round, they need to get an edge rusher in the third round. Turner has good size for the NFL and displayed improvement in his pass-rush ability over his career. Turner has the size to play base end in a 4-3 or end in a 3-4, and he also could move inside to tackle in the sub package. Turner is big, strong and raw, but he has a lot of upside with good size and is a fast defender.
2. **Trey Smith, G, Tennessee** - In 2020, Smith played well for the Volunteers. He played his natural position of guard and was a steady blocker for Tennessee in both phases. His pulmonary-issue history hurts him with some teams, but other teams say their medical staff gave Smith a thumbs up for having an NFL career. In his freshman season, Smith was one of the better guards in college football behind Quenton Nelson. Smith would fit the Vikings zone blocking scheme.
3. **Monty Rice, LB, Georgia** - Rice was a solid defender for Georgia in 2020. He is tough against the run and shows some ability to cover. Rice could be a sleeper prospect who ends up being a nice value pick and a future three-down starter. Rice took a big step as a junior, showing improved run defense and some ability to contribute in pass coverage. The Vikings need to look to the future at linebacker as Anthony Barr will be a free agent next year.
4. **Marlon Tupulotu, DT, USC** – Tupulotu is a three-year starter who missed most of his freshman season with a back injury. He possesses great first-step quickness, consistently gets leverage on opponents, and works his hands throughout the action. Athletic, rarely off his feet and fluid moving in any direction. Possesses a closing burst and shows the ability to make plays in space, even when dropped off the line. In 2019, Tuipulotu started all 12 games, this time finishing with 46 tackles, 6.0 tackles for loss, 2.0 sacks, 3 pass deflections, and a forced fumble. In 2020 in five games, Tuipulotu logged 23 tackles, 3.5 tackles for loss, 2.0 sacks, and a forced fumble. He was named a [first-team All-Pac-12 selection](https://pac-12.com/article/2020/12/21/2020-pac-12-football-all-conference-honors-and-annual-awards-announced) for the first time in his career.
5. **Richie Grant, S, UCF** - Grant played well for Central Florida in 2020, showing well in zone coverage and contributing in run defense. Grant jumped out with a massive 2018 season, totaling 108 tackles with six interceptions, two forced fumbles and three passes broken up. He looked like he could be a first-round pick with a huge presence all over the field. In 2019 though, Grant came down to earth with 78 tackles, an interception and a forced fumble. Grant provides versatility in the secondary and would fill a big need for the Vikings.
6. **Jackson Carman, OT, Clemson** - Carman was a solid left tackle for Clemson in 2020, including putting together a good performance against Notre Dame. Carman has an excellent combination of size and athleticism. Carman is a big interior blocker who was very good for Clemson in 2019. It was his first season as a starter after serving as a backup at left tackle during his freshman season. Carman needs more experience and could end up being an NFL starter after improving his technique.
7. **Quinn Meinerz, G, Wisconsin-Whitewater** - Meinerz had a quality week of practice at the Senior Bowl and turned heads with his performance. It takes a lot of impressive play on tape for a Division III offensive lineman to make it onto NFL teams' preseason watch list, and Meinerz was able to accomplish that feat for the 2021 NFL Draft. Meinerz has NFL size and strength and brings a nastiness to his game that rubs off on other players. The Vikings need to significantly upgrade their interior line play and Meinerz would provide an infusion of talent that is needed to compete in 2021.
8. **D’Wayne Eskridge, WR, Western Michigan** - Eskridge played well for Western Michigan in 2020 and earned an invitation to the Senior Bowl. He is an explosive playmaker that can also contribute on special teams returning kicks. He could compete to be a shifty slot receiver in the NFL as he has deep speed and is a threat to score on any touch. Thanks to his game-breaking speed, Eskridge could contribute quickly as a pro. Eskridge played cornerback as a junior, but he has moved to receiver for his senior year, and NFL teams had him down as a wideout for his senior year. His 2019 season was limited to four games because of a season-ending clavicle injury. The Vikings need to upgrade their third wide receiver and find a punt returner that can change field position. Eskridge fills this need.
9. **Spencer Brown, OT, Northern Iowa** - Brown was a 2-year starter at tackle for Northern Iowa and decided to skip his final year to enter the 2021 NFL Draft. Brown is a massive tackle with above average athleticism. However, he is very raw and has holes in his game. Those developmental issues are understandable because he played eight-man football in high school and was a defensive end before starting out his collegiate career at tight end. In the right system, he could grow into an NFL starter. In the NFL, Brown would fit best as a right tackle. Brown is a massive tackle who has good length with some decent feet and athleticism for a big blocker. Brown would add depth along the Vikings offensive line but would not be an immediate starter.
10. **Levi Onwuzurike, DT, Washington** - Onwuzurike decided to sit out the 2020 season, but participated at the Senior Bowl, where he had a respectable showing. Onwuzurike has a nice first-step and is dangerous to fire his gap to get upfield. Onwuzurike consistently causes disruption in the backfield. However, he struggles to finish rushes and gets tied up by offensive linemen, which is why he did not produce a lot of sacks in college and is more of a disruptor than a producer for the NFL. Onwuzurike is a solid run defender. Onwuzurike notched 45 tackles with two sacks in 2019. He was a solid defender for the Huskies, but he needs to improve his pass-rush abilities. In 2018, Onwuzurike had 34 tackles with 6.5 tackles for a loss and three sacks as one of Washington's primary replacements for Vita Vea. Onwuzurike has upside to improve and potential to be a starter in the NFL.
11. **Rashad Weaver, DE, Pittsburgh** – Pittsburgh had one of the best defensive lines in the country and they will have several players drafted this week. Weaver did not impress at the Senior Bowl which has hurt his draft stock. Weaver had a solid season in 2020, putting steady pressure on the quarterback. Coming off an injury, he showed he was back to 100 percent and was able to stay healthy. Weaver had a strong 2018 season to get on the radar for NFL advance scouts, but his redshirt junior year ended before it started with a season-ending injury suffered in training camp. If Weaver can stay healthy and build on his 2018 production, he could be a riser for the 2021 NFL Draft. Weaver would add depth along the Vikings offensive line but would not be an immediate starter.
12. **James Hudson, T, Cincinnati** - Hudson could be a nice value pick on the second day of the 2021 NFL Draft. He has a good skill set with size, quickness and athleticism. Hudson started out his collegiate career at Michigan before transferring to Cincinnati. With the Bearcats, he became a good edge protector and solid contributor in the ground game. Hudson has a lot of upside, but he may require a patient approach from the team that drafts him after only starting one full season of college football.
13. **Kendrick Green, G, Illinois** - Durable three-year starter with above-average initial quickness. Capable of playing guard or center, Green's lateral get-off makes him a natural fit for teams heavy into outside zone as a primary run scheme. He can get to play-side reach and back-side cuts and he specializes in blocking his defender out of the play once he is engaged on the move. He plays a little too upright at times and lacks the length and drive power in his lower half to move one-on-one blocks around with adequate sustain. He is an excellent run blocker but recognition inconsistencies in pass protection is a weakness. His center/guard flexibility is an advantage and teams could go either way with how they want to use him. Green has the potential to become a starter at the next level. Green fits the Vikings zone blocking scheme and is a prospect to keep an eye on in round three.
14. **Joe Tyron, DE, Washington** - After serving as a backup during his freshman season, Tryon broke out in 2019 as one of the top pass-rushers in the Pac-12. He totaled eight sacks with 41 tackles and one pass batted on the year. Tryon has a lot of upside but needs refinement in run defense and to develop his pass-rushing moves. Tyron has excellent athleticism and provides significant upside for a team that can coach him up. Tyron would be a great fit in Zimmer’s defensive scheme.

***We predict the Vikings will select Payton Turner, DE, Houston with their first pick in the third round for the Vikings.***

***We predict the Vikings will select D’Wayne Eskridge, WR, Western Michigan, with their second pick in the third round for the Vikings.***

**ROUND FOUR – Options in Round 4 that the Vikings could draft. The Vikings have four picks in round 4 this year.**

1. **Peyton Ramsey, QB, Northwestern** - Ramsey was a gutsy signal-caller who pushed his team to the Big Ten Championship in 2020. He flashed a quality arm with passing ability as a senior, but also threw the ball well as a sophomore and junior. Over the past three seasons, Ramsey was held back by a lack of talent at receiver, but he was a steadily productive player for the Wildcats. Ramsey scored a 30 on his Wonderlic test, and that would have put him among the top-three scoring quarterbacks in the 2020 NFL Draft class. Ramsey's intangibles along with his intelligence could land him on an NFL roster. Ramsey had a good pro day workout and showed better-than-expected athletic numbers. The Vikings are interested in Ramsey.
2. **Andre Cisco, S, Syracuse** - Cisco is a true ballhawk in pass coverage, and that is the first thing that stands out when watching the tape on him. Aside from his interceptions, Cisco is always going for the strip on tackles and when breaking up passes. Cisco's ball awareness is terrific, and he is very cognizant to punch the ball while making tackles. Cisco is superb in zone coverage in the middle of the field. He has very good instincts and is fast to read offenses to get in position to make plays on the ball. With good vision, Cisco has nice route recognition, anticipation, and reads the eyes of quarterbacks. Cisco is not a big safety but shows a willingness in the run game. Cisco has quality tackling technique with an advanced ability to get low to take the legs out of the ball-carrier. Cisco would fill a need for the Vikings as they need to find a playmaker opposite Harrison Smith.
3. **Davis Mills, QB, Stanford** - Mills had a good pro day, showing off a quality arm and athleticism to go with good size. Mills missed the start of the Pac-12's season due to a COVID-19 positive test. He completed over 66 percent of his passes for 1,508 yards, seven scores and three picks. He also had 37 rushing yards and three rushing touchdowns. Mills could have gone back to Stanford but decided to enter the 2021 NFL Draft.
4. **Jaylon Twyman, DT, Pittsburgh** – In 2019, Twyman logged 41 tackles, 12 tackles for loss, and 10.5 sacks for the season, Twyman was voted First Team All-ACC. In addition, he became the first Pittsburgh defensive tackle to lead the team in sacks since Aaron Donald. Twyman opted out of the 2020 college football season due to family reasons. He is an undersized, explosive three-technique lineman that fits the mold of John Randle. Fires off the snap with an explosive first step, displays tremendous quickness, and possesses a closing burst. Plays low to the ground with outstanding pad level and gets leverage on opponents. Easily changes direction and gets into space to pursue the action. Has an outstanding closing burst and is a proven pass rusher who gets to the quarterback. The Vikings have been looking for an explosive three- technique defensive tackle since the departure of Sheldon Richardson. Twyman would fill a big need for the Vikings.
5. **Kellen Mond, QB, Texas A&M** - Mond improved in 2020, showing more accuracy. He had mixed outings versus Alabama and Vanderbilt, making some beautiful passes and struggling at other times. He had a huge game against Florida to lead the Aggies to a fourth-quarter comeback win. He had a solid week of practice at Senior Bowl to help his draft stock. Mond's size, arm and athleticism is attractive. He needs to continue to improve his accuracy at the next level. He has big play ability and could become a starter at the next level.
6. **Joshuah Bledsoe, S, Missouri** - Bledsoe was a solid tackler for Missouri over the past few seasons and was a steady contributor. He showed a nice ability to break up passes as a junior, but over his career, he did not record an interception despite a lot of pass breakups. Bledsoe is a tough player who could start out as a backup and develop into a potential starting strong safety in the NFL.
7. **Grant Stuard, LB, Houston** - Houston had a quirky 2020 schedule because of the virus, but Stuard stayed consistent, producing quality tackle totals. In 2020, he recorded 61 stops and had one sack. As a junior, he had 97 tackles with one sack and four passes broken up. Stuard could stand to add some weight for the NFL, but his steady play earned him an invitation to the Senior Bowl where he had a good week and helped his draft stock. He has special teams potential for the NFL.
8. **Walker Little, OT, Stanford** - Walker had first round potential prior to this year. In pass protection, Little is tough to beat for edge rushers. He has good length and strength and is able to bend at the knee. His length and strength allow him to sustain blocks to the whistle, and he is very difficult for rushers to shed. His long arms and strong upper body also give him an edge in recoverability, so even when he is slightly out of position, he can compensate by getting enough of the rushers to give his quarterback time to throw. Generally, Little is very dependable to not allow pressure. Little also flashes some nastiness as a pass blocker which the Vikings need along the line. Little is also a very good run blocker for a left tackle. In the ground game, Little could stand to improve his ability to stay on his feet. Little would be a great addition for the Vikings and could eventually been starter along the line. With Little, you get first round talent in the fourth round.
9. **Ben Cleveland, G, Georgia** - Cleveland is a legitimate pro, wide-body frame with prototypical size for an NFL guard. He is an average athlete for his size as he relies on size and strength. The fundamentals into his first strike are sound, but he loses the sustain phase faster than expected for a man with his size and strength. He needs to improve in pass protection at the next level. He should become an average starter but has a chance to upgrade to quality starter if a team can coach him up to become a more consistent people-mover.
10. **Aaron Banks, G, Notre Dame** – Banks demonstrated first round potential as he dominated opponents at times this past year. Banks played really well for the Fighting Irish in 2020. He was a tough run blocker at the point of attack, using his size to help Notre Dame move the ball on the ground. He also was very reliable in pass protection. It was the second season in a row of good play out of Banks, who only allowed two sacks on 844 total snaps in 2019. In the NFL, Banks could be a better fit at right guard, but he has the flexibility to play on either side of the center.
11. **Jamie Newman, QB, Georgia** - Newman skipped the 2020 season in favor of preparing for the 2021 NFL Draft. His decision to opt out is probably going to cause him to slide. Newman fell under the radar while Zach Wilson, Kyle Trask and Mac Jones helped themselves while dominating the competition in 2020. At the Senior Bowl, Newman had a bad final day of practice and struggled in the actual game. He could fall deep into the third day of the 2021 NFL Draft. Newman completed 61 percent of his passes in 2019 for 2,868 yards with 26 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. He also has six rushing touchdowns with 464 yards on the ground. In 2018, Newman completed 60 percent of his passes for 1,083 yards with nine touchdowns and four interceptions.
12. **D’Ante Smith, G, East Carolina** - Smith had a respectable week at the Senior Bowl, but he needs to add weight and get stronger for the NFL. He could start out his career as a backup who works his way into a bigger role. He has strong athleticism, quickness and upside. He has been a solid blocker for East Carolina but is very undersized for the next level. Adding weight and moving inside to guard could be his best plan for sticking at the pro level.
13. **Jay Tufele, DT, USC** - Tufele did not opt back in after the Pac-12 decided to play football again. For the next level, Tufele's best fit would come as a three-technique in a 4-3 defense, and he could also play some nose tackle. However, he may not have the size and length to hold up as a two-gap tackle absorbing double teams. As an interior pass rusher, Tufele flashes the ability to contribute by putting pressure on the quarterback. Tufele is quick off the snap and he plays with good pad level to gain leverage on offensive linemen. In run defense, Tufele is generally a solid defender. He uses his strong upper body to keep guards from pushing him off the ball and he shows a nice ability to push off and pursue down the line to get in on tackles. Tufele was a disruptive presence for USC in 2019, totaling 42 tackles with 4.5 sacks and a pass batted. His run defense was improved, and he looks like he has upside to improve. After redshirting in 2017, Tufele made an impressive debut for the Trojans in 2018, racking up three sacks with 23 tackles, 4.5 tackles for a loss and a blocked field goal. He would fulfill the Vikings need for another solid three-technique defensive tackle.
14. **Derrick Barnes, LB, Purdue** - Barnes was a solid run defender for Purdue in 2020. Barnes is a tough, versatile defender that was highly productive in the Big Ten over the past two seasons. As a sophomore, he did well in run defense and his pass rush skills improved significantly in 2019. The Vikings need to look to the future at linebacker in this draft as Anthony Barr is a free agent next year.
15. **Hunter Long, TE, Boston College** - Long had a good 2020 season, showing solid pass-receiving ability for the next level. He could be a solid tight end who could become a starter or a good No. 2 or 3 tight end. Long is a solid blocker and looks like a potential starting Y tight end for the NFL. In the passing game, Long has good size and does an excellent job of winning contested catches. He uses his build to wall off defenders with skilled body control and awareness to put himself in between the ball and coverage. Long has soft reliable hands and good concentration to secure the catch while defenders are initiating contact. Long is a good red-zone contributor as a result, functioning well on underneath routes. Going down the seam and along the sideline, Long is a weapon to make catches over defenders when nothing else is open.

We think the Vikings will continue to add talent to their wide receiver depth in round 4 along with offensive line and defensive depth. They could also add a quarterback in round four.

***We predict the Vikings will select the following draft prospects with their four picks in round four:***

* ***Aaron Banks, G, Notre Dame***
* ***Kellen Mond, QB, Texas A&M***
* ***Jaylon Twyman, DT, Pittsburgh***
* ***Andre Cisco, S, Syracuse***

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

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

1. Paris Ford, S, Pittsburgh
2. Cade Johnson, WR, South Dakota State
3. Benjamin St. Juste, C, Minnesota
4. Robert Hainsey, G, Notre Dame
5. Greg Eisworth, S, Iowa State
6. Shaun Wade, CB, Ohio State
7. Tommy Kraemer, G, Notre Dame
8. Sam Ehlinger, QB, Texas
9. Marvin Wilson, DT, Florida State
10. Daelin Hayes, OLB/DE, Notre Dame
11. Shi Smith, WR, South Carolina
12. Josh Palmer, WR, Tennessee
13. Seth Williams, WR, Auburn
14. Dazz Newsome, WR, North Carolina
15. Cornell Powell, WR, Clemson
16. Evan McPherson, K, Florida

Sleepers:

1. Javian Hawkins, RB, Louisville
2. Chris Garrett, DE, Concordia-St. Paul
3. Tay Gowan, CB, UCF

The Vikings have a total of 10 picks this year. 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
* Defensive End
* Safety
* Wide Receiver

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

Mink and Obie from Naples!