

## 2023 S'FELD SCOUTING SERVICES NFL DRAFT PREVIEW

### **1. Carolina Bryce Young QB Alabama**

*The Panthers gave up significant compensation to move from Pick No. 12 to the #1 overall pick in the draft, and SSS believes that they had their man in mind the whole time. That man is Alabama standout signal caller Bryce Young. While we here at S'feld Services are not as high on this pick as new head coach Frank Reich, we do understand the draw of Young. His field sense and pocket presence are second to none among this QB class. Young has proven that he can use his feet but that he much prefers to wait in the pocket as long as possible to allow his receivers to work to get open. His comparison in that regard would be Broncos QB Russell Wilson, and ironically, his size is the same issue that dropped Russ in his draft and that has many teams ranking QBs like C.J. Stroud, Will Levis and even Anthony Richardson ahead of Young on their board. Make no mistake, the Panthers primary job after handing the card in with Young's name on it is protecting him for the duration of his tenure in Carolina. Young's physique is frail compared to his contemporaries and injury is the only reason that SSS would be leery of going all-in on Young. Young replaced Tua Tagovailoa at Alabama and as we have seen with Tua in Miami, the biggest obstacle has been keeping Tua upright. If the Panthers can do that with Young, he will be a quality passer in this league, but the coaching staff will still be waiting with bated breath every time Young takes his 5-to-7 step drop.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *Carolina was not many experts' guess as to who would trade up with Chicago to get the 1<sup>st</sup> overall pick. SSS contends that there very well could be another team lurking in the weeds that no one has talked about who could make a move into the top 5 tonight as well. While Tennessee is the hot team name throw around to make a strong move, don't be shocked if a team that no one had on their radar tries to come up once the festivities begin.*

### **2. Houston C.J. Stroud QB Ohio State**

*As is usually the case with the NFL Draft leading into the final few days before the actual picks are made, rumors and innuendo have been running rampant against C.J. Stroud. Supposedly, he scored low on the S2 Cognitive Test Score and from what people are telling me, no QB that has ever scored less than a 40 on that test has ever amounted to anything. Stroud scored an 18. You know what score I remember about C.J. Stroud? The 41 he hung on Georgia in the College Football Championship semifinal. Give us a break. Film over fallacy my friends. Film over fallacy. Stroud is ranked as the #1 overall QB by SSS and while Houston has tried to convey to the world that they are interested in a defensive player such as Bama's Will Anderson or Texas Tech's Tyree Wilson, I think the real experts know you can't go into another season trotting Davis Mills out to your fanbase. Much like Bryce Young, Stroud prefers to use his arm over his legs but can be effective with both, which is a trait all GMs salivate over. His accuracy is off the charts and while some have said that in the Ohio State system he didn't have to read progressions, we at SSS do not voice that same sentiment. His size gives him a head and shoulders advantage over other QBs in our book and Stroud can also take a big hit and get right back up off the canvas and beat you again. While*

Houston may find some 11<sup>th</sup> hour suitors for this pick, it would make zero sense for the Texans to pass on a QB of this caliber in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round for the second straight year.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – SSS seems to be on an island with this projection but that’s okay. We’ve never been crowd followers or front runners. Our job is to cut through the smoke to give you the clear picture and some teams are better at disguising what they want to do than others. We still have faith that Houston realizes the magnitude of this selection and will chart a new course heading for Progress over Despair. There is always a chance that because Stroud uses the same agency that former QB Deshaun Watson had, that Houston’s brass doesn’t want to go down that road again, but each player is different and the Texans should be able to find a way to massage the kinks out of the poor relationship they had with Watson and now Stroud’s representation.

3. Arizona	Will Anderson	EDGE	Alabama
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If you want to know where the biggest trade movement could potentially happen, then you have come to the right place. Arizona holds the selection that is ripe for the picking by several teams who could be interested not only in one of the top 5 QBs, but also in landing the top defensive player on their board (Will Anderson, Tyree Wilson or even Jalen Carter). New Cardinals GM Monti Ossenfort really needs to take into consideration the long game here and see if he can find a taker who may be in panic mode and willing to give him more than the pick is typically worth. Unfortunately for him, we believe that Indy is willing to stay put at #4 to draft the best QB available to them and that Las Vegas, Atlanta and even potentially Tampa won’t be willing to part with draft capital that Ossenfort will demand. Because of that, the Cards stay the course at #3 and significantly upgrade their defense with Bama outside backer Will Anderson. While Ossenfort would love to make a deal, we get the sense that new Arizona head coach Jonathan Gannon would like to start his head coaching career with a showstopper to build his defense around. Anderson attacks from the corner like he was shot out of a cannon and has the closing burst that is reminiscent of past greats like Ray Lewis and Brian Urlacher. His fluidity makes him hard to block on any level and of any defensive player in this draft – Anderson has the highest floor and is the safest pick to assure that you get a superstar. SSS is a big fan of the Ossenfort hiring and we know that he won’t be tricked like in a game of 3 Card Monte to pass on a sure thing. Great situation for Will Anderson here and great start to the new era of Cardinals football.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – Lots of folks are down on QB Kyler Murray but remember this – nobody was all that excited about Daniel Jones a year ago either. The best thing that could ever happen to Murray may be hearing a new voice. A more disciplined voice as opposed to the kid gloves that Kliff Kingsbury used with Kyler Murray. Murray’s time to shine is now and a no-nonsense approach while sometimes painful early, can be very beneficial in the long run – especially with someone as talented as Murray.

4. Indianapolis	Will Levis	QB	Kentucky
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*SSS has said for a long, long time that crazy Jim Irsay was going to hit the panic button before draft day and throw everything he had at a new QB. Well, SSS may be eating a little crow on that because we are within the 24-hour window of the draft and Indianapolis didn't offer a king's ransom to Chicago for #1 overall like Carlina did, and they haven't tried to make a move to #2 with Houston (which isn't likely anyway since they are in the same division), and he hasn't tried to make a play for #3 with Arizona which would protect the Colts from anyone trading ahead of them to steal a QB. Maybe there is a new sense of calm in Indy and Irsay and GM Chris Ballard are actually going to keep their draft stock and take whoever falls to them. Even better for Irsay and Ballard is we believe they are higher on Kentucky QB Will Levis than Florida QB Anthony Richardson, and the fact that Peyton Manning is a big fan of Levis only cements this pick for the Colts.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *SSS views Will Levis as another Mitch Trubisky, and fans, that's not a good thing. Much like Trubisky, Levis has made more of a name off his physical stature than his on the field presence and this is not a pick that SSS thinks is a particularly good one. The Jets took Zach Wilson in the draft because he made a few amazing throws versus air at his Pro Day and that turned out so badly for them that they have been forced to trade a 2<sup>nd</sup> Rounder this year and a likely future 1<sup>st</sup> rounder to Green Bay for a 39-year-old QB to try to offset that mistake. Well, the Colts will in all likelihood be back at the table in a few years to try to right another wrong as S'feld believes the best option for Indy here would be to leave Will alone.*

5. Seattle	Tyree Wilson	EDGE	Texas Tech
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*I'm not sure SSS has seen one of the "so-called" experts not project the Seahawks to take Georgia DT Jalen Carter in this spot. And to be honest, I get it. Head coach Pete Carroll is a player's coach, and he isn't afraid to take risks on guys that have a checkered background. He made a huge deal years ago with the Vikings for WR and kickoff return extraordinaire Percy Harvin, when Percy had more attitude than the WWE. He had more characters on his Legion of Doom defense than you are allowed to tweet, and he just has always been the fun-loving, devil may care, let's go get 'em coach that players love. But even Pete Carroll is going to take a hard pass on Jalen Carter. SSS believes Carter is carrying more baggage than a bellhop and with the emergence of QB Geno Smith last year, the Seahawks believe they can contend and SSS believes they can too. Seattle has many assets from the Russell Wilson heist...I mean trade, and they don't want to miss on a guy at #5 overall when they can get Texas Tech edge rusher Tyree Wilson, who may be just as good as Carter. Wilson came on strong last season and while he obviously didn't get much media attention playing at Texas Tech, he got a ton of attention from scouts who saw what a freak of nature he was with a massive wingspan and ability to blow up opposing tackles with a devastating swim move. Strength is not a problem for Wilson at all, and while some see a little bit of a project with Wilson, SSS projects that Wilson will create some sleepless nights for opponents in Seattle.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *Let's not understate how important last season was to the Seahawks. They were left for dead when they dealt QB Russell Wilson and absolutely no one had them making the postseason in a division that featured the reigning Super Bowl champion Rams and the 49ers. But*



**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – For all the success that Josh McDaniels has had as an offensive coordinator for the Patriots, this is his do-or-die season upcoming as head coach of the Raiders. After butchering his first head coaching opportunity with the Broncos, McDaniels had to bide his time before he got the right fit for his second chance. Should this season go up in smoke, not even Cheech nor Chong will be able to get him a third opportunity.

**8. Atlanta Devon Witherspoon CB Illinois**

We are not sure there is a more directionless team than the Atlanta Falcons. Are they 4-13 bad? No. They win 7 games each year, but it never feels like they are ever threatening, and their players don't scare you or cause you to think, "Hey, these guys might be a dangerous playoff team if they get in!" They are just some guys running around on a football field making occasional plays and losing more than they win. Are we really supposed to believe that QB Desmond Rider is going to be the answer? Tyler Allgeier is going to pave the way as their top running back? And do not get me started on this receiving corps. Quite frankly it may be the worst in the NFL. But it's not like things are much better on the defensive side, and if trading for former Lions cover man Jeff Okudah is the best you can do, then God help you. When in doubt, start on defense and that is what Atlanta needs to do here. Witherspoon is going to be a star and he comes from good NFL stock as Lovie Smith recruited and coached him at Illinois for a spell. He has alpha traits and won't back down to any receiver, and with as many holes as the Falcons have in their nest, this one can be plugged easily with a player like Witherspoon.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – If you were looking for a spot where ownership interference (and there is way more of that than most people know) could come into play, it might be here. Falcons owner Arthur Blank loves to be relevant, and right now the Falcons are probably the last team you think of when trying to name all 32 NFL organizations. They aren't sexy, they don't have big time stars and they are the very definition of nondescript. If Blank wants to be talked about, the Falcons are definitely in a drafting position to do something wild to enter the discussion.

**\*\*\*TRADE\*\*\* (Houston trades with Chicago, giving up Pick #12, #73 & 2024 5<sup>th</sup> Rounder to acquire Pick #9)**

**9. Houston Jaxon Smith-Njigba WR Ohio State**

At this point you are probably asking yourself, "Sfeld, where are all the trades? We want some trades!" Well, what you want and what you get are two totally different things and we don't foresee as much wheeling and dealing going on early as some of the other prognosticators. That being said, we do deliver a trade at Pick #9 where the Chicago Bears continue to raise up by moving down, trading with the Texans to move down three positions. Houston has already picked up their future front man in QB C.J. Stroud so what better way to welcome him to the Lone Star state than by letting him do the Texas 2-step with his Buckeye partner in crime Jaxon Smith-Njigba. JSN is very, very high in the S'feld overall player rankings and Houston not only takes the player S'feld is most excited about seeing progress (Stroud) but they may be getting the guy we are second-most excited about seeing as well in Njigba. JSN's numbers from his last full year at Ohio State (2021) are staggering. In 14 games he recorded 95 catches for 1,606 yards and 9 scores. JSN hits top speed

quickly and is as smooth in his route running as anyone. His chances of succeeding in the NFL are very high, but pairing him with his college QB? Houston, we have no problems.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – Don't forget a few years ago that Penn State linebacker Micah Parsons sat out the entire COVID year of 2020 before entering the NFL Draft. That decision caused him to fall out of the top 10 in the draft and Dallas had the good fortune to scoop him up at #12. I think there are 11 GMs who are probably still regretting the decision to pass on Parsons. SSS believes the same thing may hold true for JSN who only played in 3 games last year before shutting it down because of a lingering hamstring injury. Out of sight, can mean out of mind for some, but not for the Texans who make out like bandits in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round.

<b>10. Philadelphia</b>	<b>Nolan Smith</b>	<b>EDGE</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
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If you don't want to hear non-stop praise for Philly GM Howie Roseman, then you might be best served proceeding to the next pick. He's quite honestly the best in the business and all he does is continue to find new ways to prove it. Gutsy move to get Carson Wentz in the 2016 Draft. Somewhat controversial decision to draft QB Jalen Hurts while Wentz was still on the team. Huge move to secure a star wide receiver in A.J. Brown from the Titans last season. Most importantly, he has developed a culture where star players want to be in Philly and believe not only in Roseman, but the team and the city as well. So when you consider that the Eagles are the top dog in the NFC right now, then how in the hell do they have two picks in the 1st round as well? Because Roseman masters not only the short game but the long game as well. SSS projects Georgia standout Nolan Smith here as a man who can give the Eagles a versatile weapon on the defensive side of the ball to wreak havoc and serve as a Swiss Army knife to steady this defense. This dude is a disruptor, and he will not only be a force to be reckoned with off the edge, but he has exceptional run skills as well. Don't let his size fool you. He brings the fire without even needing the matches. The rich get richer as Nolan Smith finds a perfect landing spot in Philly.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – The Eagles have the luxury with these two 1<sup>st</sup> Round picks to do need, best player, trade out, get conservative, get aggressive – the sky is the limit. There may not be a more fun team to watch work on Thursday night than the E! A! G! L! E! S! EAGLES! And chances are, much like Rumeal Robinson in the 1989 NCAA Championship Game, they will go 2-for-2.

<b>11. Tennessee</b>	<b>Paris Johnson</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Ohio State</b>
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"Hey S'feld! What are you doing! Tennessee is trading up for a QB! Don't you know?" With what? C'mon people. Before you just state that this team or that team is going to make a trade how about you look at their assets. Tennessee doesn't have any. Or certainly not enough to go up to #3 as many are saying to get a QB. You gotta spend money to make money, but unfortunately for the Titans, they don't have the money to spend right now. And with a new GM in the fold basically hand-picked by the head coach, I don't think they are going off the rails to use future assets to get a QB for a defensive-minded man like Mike Vrabel. Instead, they hold their ground and actually help their current QB Ryan Tannehill get a little more time to throw by drafting their top offensive tackle in Ohio State's Paris Johnson. For being a relatively good team, the Titans have more needs than



against better competition. He tracks QBs like enhanced GPS and will provide the Packers with answers to some of the best opposing offenses like Chat GPT. With three picks in the 1<sup>st</sup> two rounds, Green Bay levels up with the addition of the Iowa star.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – It's a new day and it's a new dawn in Green Bay after the Pack trade Aaron Rodgers to the Jets for a bigger haul than I think anyone expected. Kudos to the Packers brass. They had what looked like little leverage and somehow convinced the Jets that they had all of it, dealing away a guy who was never going to play for them again anyway. The Jets throw the Packers a lifeline with multiple picks and all of the sudden, Green Bay doesn't feel as dead in the water without A-Rodg as people thought they would be.

<b>14. New England</b>	<b>Peter Skoronski</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Northwestern</b>
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Not a lot of overthinking needs to be done here by the Patriots. Of the top offensive linemen, Skoronski can play outside or kick inside to give New England the flexibility they love to have on the line. The Patriots have rarely struggled with their offensive line but last year the group was inconsistent at best. While SSS isn't a big fan of Skor, he becomes more valuable if you don't strictly rely on him at tackle. The Patriots are probably one of those situations for Skoronski where he ends up getting selected by the team that gives him the best chance to thrive. While SSS found him to be inconsistent more than we would like for a top 20 offensive tackle, you can't deny his effort and head coach Bill Belichick isn't drafting guys this high that don't love football.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – Say what you want about Northwestern football, but Skoronski will become the third Wildcat selected in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round over the past three years. That's impressive for any team not named Alabama, Georgia or Ohio State. SSS would love to see what Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald could do at the next level in the NFL, but it seems as though he is content to be the evangelist of Evanston.

<b>15. New York Jets</b>	<b>Broderick Jones</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Georgia</b>
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It may seem like a little thing to most draft experts, but the Aaron Rodgers trade package, which included the Packers switching 1<sup>st</sup> Round positions so they get the Jets 13<sup>th</sup> pick and the Jets fall back two spots to #15 is actually super significant! Depending on which trade value chart you trust, the difference in point value between #13 and #15 is around 100 points which is equivalent to a mid 3<sup>rd</sup> rounder!!!! That is no small giveaway by the Jets to the Packers and interestingly enough, SSS finds the value of 1<sup>st</sup> rounders takes a more than modest slide around pick #13 or #14. That leaves the Jets, who could really use a solid offensive tackle, settling for Broderick Jones of Georgia over a more coveted target they potentially could have had at #13. Don't get us wrong, Jones is not chopped liver, but he isn't exactly a guy you hear scouts talking about a ton either. The point is, every little aspect of a trade matters and while the Jets may have looked at moving down two spots as a mild trade off to get Aaron Rodgers, that is Green Bay playing all the angles in a cute way.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – The Jets have done a lot of things right over the past few years to set themselves up to be competitive, but SSS is starting to think they may have undone some of those things in the last few months. The selection of Zach Wilson as their QB of the future was a terrible



<b>18. Detroit</b>	<b>Deonte Banks</b>	<b>CB</b>	<b>Maryland</b>
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*If you look at Detroit's top 5 needs, they include DT, DE, LB, TE and even running back. But SSS thinks cornerback can't be overlooked either. The Lions jettisoned Jeff Okudah, and even though he was not a star by any stretch of the imagination, he did have his moments. Having already addressed the defensive line with Jalen Carter at Pick #6, the Lions keep roaring into the upcoming season by focusing on defense with Maryland CB Deonte Banks. You don't hear about Banks like you do Gonzalez and Witherspoon, but he's no slouch either. He has the size and the strength and can excel in all types of coverages. Whereas Joey Porter Jr. is best served in a jamming style, Banks can help you cash in no matter what style you want to play. With a 4.35 40-time, speed and recovery won't be an issue, and DB becomes one of Detroit's starting DBs on Day 1.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *SSS has to believe that even the Lions couldn't have expected QB Jared Goff to have the bounce back season that he did last year. Goff threw 29 TDs against only 7 INTs and played much better than the man he was traded for (Matthew Stafford). He also showed up in the biggest game of the year when the Lions went into Lambeau Field and knocked Green Bay out of the playoffs by winning the season finale. In the same way Geno Smith provided the Seahawks with an unexpectedly high-performing QB option, Goff did the exact same thing and may have prevented the Lions from needing to identify a future QB in the next few drafts.*

<b>19. Tampa Bay</b>	<b>Anton Harrison</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>
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*Well, it was a good run. The Bucs of pre-Brady are probably going to look a lot like the Bucs of post-Brady. Not very good. It was a magical 3-year window for Tampa Bay but now they are looking into the mirror and seeing QBs Baker Mayfield and Kyle Trask staring back at them. They are too far down the line to make a significant trade for one of the top 3 QBs, and rolling the dice on any of the others is just throwing bad money after good. So if you are going to suffer from QB regression, the best solution is to buy your QB more time in the pocket. That comes in the form of Oklahoma OT Anton Harrison. Harrison isn't going to turn a lot of heads, but he will be a suitable piece on a line that already includes all-world tackle Tristan Wirfs. The Bucs can play piecemeal with the interior of the line and in all honesty, they just need to draft an offensive lineman here regardless of what is available. While safety is a need and Bama's Brian Branch could check that box, drafting a safety at #19 seems like a stretch for Team Tampa.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *This Tampa team has a long road ahead and SSS doesn't believe they will be returning to the postseason any time soon. Tom Brady showed his greatness in so many ways, but the level by which he lifted players up is now but a fading memory, and much like the Bucs were a non-factor with Jameis Winston, they will be a non-factor with Baker Mayfield.*

<b>20. Seattle</b>	<b>Calijah Kencey</b>	<b>DT</b>	<b>Pittsburgh</b>
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*There are many that will laugh at this projection and question why the Seahawks would take an undersized defensive tackle here. Because size doesn't always matter, especially when you are the possessor of the biggest motor this side of the Mississippi. That is what the Seahawks are getting in Pitt DT Calijah Kencey. While he is not the best run stopper you will find, he follows in the footsteps of another Pitt great, Aaron Donald, in being a holy terror when it comes to rushing the QB from the*

inside. He wins at the point of attack, and instead of calling him Calijah, you might as well call him Chucky, because he makes it look like child's play. His closes on QBs like a defensive end and changes direction as well as any interior player in the draft. His get off is explosive and if used as a rotational piece as opposed to an every down player, he will be all the more valuable. Seattle is a few defensive players away from being one of the most well-balanced teams in the NFC and by adding Tyree Wilson at #5 and Kencey at #25, the scales appear tipped in their favor.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – The fact that the Seahawks got a better QB (and a plethora of picks) out of trading away Russell Wilson is one of the most insane owns of all time. Russ made life hell for the Seahawks near the end of his stay and the phrase “you better watch what you wish for” has never hit home like Russ going to the Broncos. His Pro Bowl seasons in Seattle feel like they are miles away in Denver.

## 21. Miami

PICK FORFEITED

## 22. LA Chargers

Zay Flowers

WR

Boston College

Death, taxes and the Chargers receiving corps being hurt, beat up, doubtful or downgraded every single week. While the Chargers have their franchise QB in Justin Herbert, their window for competing cannot be assumed to run in a parallel line with Herbert's career. He won't always have Austin Ekeler, Keenan Allen and Mike Williams around him, so the need to add one more big-time weapon is essential. The Chargers have invested in Joey Bosa and Khalil Mack so the 2023 season may be the best opportunity for them to make noise before contract restraints make competing more difficult. There are always teams that you just know are going to do exactly what you think they should do, and LAC is one of those here. This pick HAS to be a receiver and fortunately enough, so many of the teams ahead of LA need players that aren't receivers that the Chargers should get a quality option here. Zay Flowers is one of those quality options. A burner who can take the ball deep and take the top off the defense, scouts threw bouquets at Flowers praising him for his competitiveness and fire to be the best in the country. He brings the diva WR attitude without the baggage and has the ability to make plays in the run game and on jailbreak screens as much as he can hurt you downfield. He is the missing piece to the Chargers offensive puzzle and when he gets to the open field it is game, set, match Flowers all day long.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – SSS keeps waiting for the Chargers to break through and they keep playing Lucy to our Charlie Brown. The loss to Jacksonville last season in the playoffs was inexcusable, and for as well as Justin Herbert has played, he can't lose a game like that. You get to the point with the Chargers where you wonder how they are going to sabotage their season every year. The seat is as hot for head coach Brandon Staley as it is for anyone in the NFL. SSS was shocked he was retained after last season, and you can bet that if the Chargers don't win a playoff game in 2023, there won't be a 2024 for Staley.

**23. Baltimore** **Will McDonald IV** **DE** **Iowa State**

*What a fun offseason for the Baltimore Ravens. They have had to deal with QB Lamar Jackson's drama nonstop, they have added Odell Beckham Jr. in a desperation play to make Jackson happy and on top of that – they are no longer the major threats in their division with Cincinnati pushing them to the side. But if you look back over the Ravens history, when things start getting a little rocky or sideways for them, they always go back to basics. Defense. That was an Ozzie Newsome philosophy which has continued into today. The Ravens look for star power and no one came on at the end of the season improving his draft stock as much as DE Will McDonald IV. McDonald would finally break the curse of an Iowa State player not being drafted in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round since 1973. If you are waiting that long to break a curse, Will McDonald is a darn good guy to break it with.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *For all the success the Ravens have had over the last 10 years since their last Super Bowl victory, they have only won two playoff games in that time despite posting double-digit wins five times. The arrow is a lot closer to pointing down for Baltimore than it is to pointing up and SSS gets the sense that Baltimore may be closer to moving on from Lamar Jackson than giving him more rope.*

**24. Minnesota** **Emmanuel Forbes** **CB** **Mississippi St.**

*It feels like the Minnesota Vikings are always projected a 1<sup>st</sup> Round corner in each and every draft and just like déjà vu all over again, here we go. Here we go. The Purple only have one pick in the first two rounds so they have to cash in on it. Minnesota could obviously be a team looking to trade down to get more, but if that opportunity doesn't come, the Vikes almost assuredly have to take a corner. As famous sports broadcaster Jim McKay would say - Patrick Petersen, Cam Dantzler and Duke Shelley - well, they're all gone. That leaves Andrew Booth Jr., Byron Murphy and Akayleb Evans manning the corner spots and any food critic can tell you that is not a recipe for success. However, Mississippi State CB Emmanuel Forbes lands at #24 on the top 500 list and with 14 career interceptions, of which six were returned for TDs, the Vikings get a playmaker with fantastic instincts. His potential is off the charts, and he would be able to give the Vikings a shot in the arm to relieve the strain. Forbes gives Minnesota a boost on the backside of the 1<sup>st</sup> Round.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *There are very few GMs that S'feld Services respected more than Rick Spielman and while the Vikings moved on from Mike Zimmer following the 2022 season, SSS believes they should have never shown Trader Rick the door too. Spielman was the port in the storm for the Vikings for years, making huge trades, providing consistent depth and finding diamonds in the rough throughout his tenure. Lost in the success of the Vikings 13-4 finish last season was the fact that new GM Kwesi Adofo-Mensah's first draft was an abject failure. Don't believe us? CBS Sports ranked the Vikings 2022 Draft Class dead last among all 32 teams. 1<sup>st</sup> Round safety Lewis Cine couldn't beat out Cam Bynum or something named Josh Metellus to get on the field beyond special teams, and when he did play, he got hurt and was done for the season. 2<sup>nd</sup> Round corner Andrew Booth was known for injuries while he was at Clemson and now he is known for injuries as a Viking after a torn meniscus ended his rookie campaign. Guard Ed Ingram played a lot for the Vikings which was a positive, unfortunately he didn't play well, which was a negative. 3<sup>rd</sup> Round LB Brian Asamoah played a grand total of 119 snaps on defense. The remainder of the picks were spot*

players at best and while they all remained on the team, that is merely because to cut any of them would have been an indicator of failure and the Purple weren't going to give anyone that perception.

<b>25. Jacksonville</b>	<b>Myles Murphy</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>Clemson</b>
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As many a coach or personnel man will tell you – the difference between being 6-11 or 11-6 in the NFL is only a handful of plays. That point was proven by Jacksonville last year when they exceeded expectations and operated like an actual professional organization under head coach Doug Pederson. Now that the Jags have established that they are no longer a pushover, they look to build a defense that can balance their offense. Their 3-4 defense lacks firepower at left or right defensive end, so Myles Murphy gets the call at #25. Reviews are all over the board on Murphy but SSS can confirm that he is definitely a 1<sup>st</sup> Round grade with superior size and lethal burst that can leave offensive tackles dazed and confused. His athleticism is unquestioned, and he can power through or counter even the best punches from offensive tackles.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – It only took one year of a new regime to rinse away the bad taste Urban Meyer left in the mouths of Jaguars fans. Doug Pederson pushed this team into the playoffs and then proceeded to pull off one of the biggest comebacks in playoff history knocking the Chargers out. This team has now added former Falcons superstar receiver Calvin Ridley, and it feels like it has an offense that can compete every game with Trevor Lawrence taking a big step forward last season. Pederson is definitely a QB whisperer so look for Lawrence to take another step forward in 2023.

<b>26. New York Giants</b>	<b>Quentin Johnson</b>	<b>WR</b>	<b>TCU</b>
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As you look through many a mock draft you will find that several do not include TCU WR Quentin Johnson. Well, SSS is here to tell you that he is one of our top sleepers for the 2023 draft. In an era where everyone values speed and downhill ability, SSS knows that you can't win if you don't score in the red zone, and big body targets like DK Metcalf and Mike Evans can make life a whole lot easier for you when you can play the "just throw it up and we'll go get it" game. That's why Quentin Johnson is the ideal fit for the Giants. Not only does he have the size, he can operate well for a big man and make adjustments to the ball as well as any receiver who will come off the board in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round. If you get it close, he's going to haul it in. With NYG QB Daniel Jones coming into his own last season under head coach Brian Daboll, the Giants add a freakish outside threat to go along with freakish tailback Saquon Barkley. This Q will not be anonymous to anyone when he starts making plays in 2023.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – Daniel Jones is a great example of how a coach can refurbish a career. Had DJ had one more year under the previous regime, he probably continues to struggle and goes down the current path that Baker Mayfield is on of being a vagabond QB just trying to hold on to relevance year after year. But Daboll showed his true genius by simplifying the game for Jones and playing to his strengths which resulted in the Giants making the playoffs, winning in the playoffs, and giving Jones the bag to stay around for a while.

**27. Dallas Bijan Robinson RB Texas**

*Every year you see the player that folks can't believe is free falling in the draft after being projected to be a top-10 to top-15 pick. Well we've now identified that player in this draft and it's Texas standout Bijan Robinson. Bijan's drop is a combination of teams not valuing his position early in the draft and having the teams that truly need a tailback not drafting until later in the proceedings. But we know that if Bijan actually is available at Pick #27 in the draft, he won't be at #28. Dallas lives and dies by investing in their offensive line and a multi-back approach. Now that former RB Ezekiel Elliott is on the open market, the Cowboys reinvent their 1-2 punch by pairing Robinson with Tony Pollard. The worst kept secret in the league last year was that Pollard was actually the man over Elliott anyway, and Pollard's burst and explosion combined with Robinson's would give Dallas the best running back room in the business. J.R. Ewing himself couldn't strike oil this rich and Dallas emerges from Round 1 only needing to find a future TE to be a complete offense.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *It definitely feels like Dallas is going offense in this spot no matter what falls to them, and while we love Bijan to them in this spot, there are several tight ends that would fit in nicely with this offense like Dalton Kincaid from Utah, Michael Meyer from Notre Dame, or Luke Musgrave from Oregon State.*

**28. Buffalo Jordan Addison WR USC**

*While linebacker is a major need for Buffalo to keep head coach Sean McDermott's unit as an elite one, the investment in offense is probably more important as teams in the AFC keep trying to score their way to titles. QB Josh Allen has a Tier 1 weapon in Stefon Diggs, but Gabe Davis didn't emerge quite as much as several people thought after his breakthrough in the 2021 postseason. Pair Diggs with an elite route runner like Addison, who has proven to be a YAC monster, and offensive coordinator Ken Dorsey will be in the lab like a mad scientist scheming ways to break down defenses. The Bills could potentially take a running back here like Jahmyr Gibbs from Alabama to try to solve the one position (RB) that has haunted them, but that feels like a reach. Addison is the value and need play combo that makes draft decisions much easier and Buffalo can feel like they are on par with Kansas City after adding this versatile weapon.*

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – *IF SSS was surprised by anything last year it was Cincy going into Buffalo and making the Bills look very average on their home field. That was a gut punch for a Bills team that thought they were going to be the AFC representatives in the Super Bowl all season. No one likes a slice of humble pie but that may serve as the impetus for the Bills to revert to being the predator again over the prey, and finally getting over the hump and back to a Super Bowl.*

**29. Cincinnati Dalton Kincaid TE Utah**

*If you thought the Cincinnati offense was dangerous enough already, wait until they add a poor man's version of Travis Kelce to their arsenal. While there are much better blocking tight ends in this draft than Dalton Kincaid, there are no better receiving ones and that's a fact. Kincaid may be labeled as a tight end, but he runs and moves like a receiver and will create matchup problems galore as a vertical threat on the seams and with an enormous catch radius. Cincinnati has crazy*

talent already at the skill positions and Kincaid along with newly signed TE Irv Smith Jr. would give them the complete package.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – SSS felt Cincinnati would suffer the infamous Super Bowl hangover in 2022 but we were completely proven wrong as Cincy went 12-4 and shed any sort of fluke label they were given. I can't think of many QBs I would want over Joe Burrow at this point and with Ja'Marr Chase, Tee Higgins and Tyler Boyd all returning, even George W. Bush would be able to spot these weapons of mass destruction.

<b>30. New Orleans</b>	<b>Bryan Bresee</b>	<b>DT</b>	<b>Clemson</b>
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It is still taking some time for SSS to look at the New Orleans Saints without former head coach Sean Payton on the sidelines or former QB Drew Brees under center, but alas, those glory days are over, and the Saints will try to hit the rest button again this year after signing Derek Carr to replace Jameis Winston. Carr should provide an upgrade over Winston, and with RB Alvin Kamara and wideouts Michael Thomas and Chris Olave as his options, Carr won't have a ton of excuses if the offense doesn't gel. Defensively however, the Saints took a step back last season and the primary issue heading into the 2023 season is the front four. Cam Jordan is always going to be your lead dog, but help is needed everywhere else. That's why the Saints have to make a need-based pick by taking Bryan Bresee of Clemson. Bresee has a bit of an injury history, but his talent puts him right in the conversation with Calijah Kancey and Michigan's Mazi Smith as the 2<sup>nd</sup> best defensive tackles after Jalen Carter.

**\*THE EXTRA POINT\*** – A few years ago the NFC South featured heavyweights with Tom Brady playing for the Bucs and Drew Brees slinging it for the Saints. Now the division is an absolute mess and 8-9 was good enough to win the division last season. The Saints are nothing special but stacked against a rebuilding Panthers team, a discombobulated Falcons team, and a Tampa Bay team that will be lucky to get back to 8-9 again, they are the giants of the division and should be the odds on favorite to claim the division.

<b>31. Philadelphia</b>	<b>Brian Branch</b>	<b>CB/S</b>	<b>Alabama</b>
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Huuuuuuuge get here for Philadelphia. When you lose talented players like C.J. Gardener-Johnson and Marcus Epps, it's not often that you get the opportunity to restock the cupboard with a player of Branch's immense ability. Safety is the defensive version of running back in that it is not valued in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round of a draft, but when it comes to Branch, maybe it should be. Branch has a killer mindset and is like a coach on the field with his football IQ. If there is a quality you want your safeties to have it is instincts, and Branch has them in spades. He reacts as well as any hybrid defensive back you will find and is not afraid to take on blockers and be physical when he has to. Just because he plays in Philly doesn't mean he will show receivers any brotherly love as he can diagnose and disrupt whatever comes his way. This is a Day 1 starter for Philadelphia and a player that will become very popular, very quickly in Philly.

