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

This year’s draft will be one of the most unpredictable drafts in the last 10 years. This draft is one of the deepest drafts in recent memory due to the record number of juniors declaring for the draft – 95 in total (compared with 73 last year). Each year more and more juniors are declaring for the NFL draft which improves the depth of the draft. As a result, you can get first round talent in rounds 2 and 3. This draft does offers both “blue chip” prospects and is extremely deep at most positions. 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 2-5 due to the depth of this draft.

We expect movement in the first half of the first round, particularly the top ten. A lot of teams are looking to trade down – the question is “are there enough teams willing to trade up”. If there are enough teams willing to trade up, we could see a lot of movement in the first 10 picks and last 10 picks of the first round. Many teams covet the top defensive players and the top left tackles in the draft. As a result, it will be very difficult to pick the specific player and team in the first round due to the movement expected.

 The strengths of the 2014 draft include:

1. Wide Receiver - In terms of wide receiver, this is an extremely deep draft with several blue chip prospects. You will be able to get great value in rounds 2-4 in this draft. There are several blue chip prospects at wide receiver. We could have as many as 5 wide receivers go in the first round. The cream of the crop is Sammy Watkins from Clemson. He is a tremendous playmaker that is extremely explosive. He can take the top off the defense and led the SEC in YAC (yards after catch) yards. Watkins will be drafted in the top 5 with St. Louis a potential destination at number two. The next wide receiver drafted in the first round is Mike Evans from Texas A&M. He has excellent size at 6’5” and is a matchup problem for defenses. He isn’t a burner but provides adequate speed and is excellent when the ball is in the air. It will be interesting to see who made the other one better – Evans or Manziel. We will find out as each player enters the NFL this season. Brandin Cooks will also be drafted in the first round. The Biletnikoff award winner offers tremendous speed, quickness and productivity catching 128 passes for 1,730 yards and 17 TDs. He is the next “Percy Harvin” with better route running and receiving skills. Other potential first round picks include: Marquise Lee, USC, Kelvin Benjamin, Florida State and Odell Beckham Jr., LSU. Lee had a subpar season but his Sophomore season he was the best receiver in college football. Lee is explosive and has a terrific burst and quickness with the ball in his hands. Benjamin offers prototypical size and speed at 6’5” and 240 pounds. He is a physical receiver that most teams covet. Beckham was extremely productive at LSU. He is a tremendous playmaker with excellent speed. Jordon Matthews, Vanderbilt and Cody Latimer, WR, Indiana will either go in round 1 or 2 depending on team needs. In addition, teams will find WR talent in rounds 2 – 4 due to the depth of this draft including prospects such as Allen Robinson, Penn State, Davante Adams, Fresno State and Donte Moncrief, Ole Miss.
2. Offensive Tackle – This is a deep offensive tackle draft with three blue chip prospects that will go in the top 15. There could be as many as 4-5 Offensive Tackles taken in the first round with three legitimate “blue chip” prospects. This year’s class is led by tackles Greg Robinson, Auburn, Jake Matthews, Texas A&M, Taylor Lewan, Michigan, Zach Martin, Notre Dame and Cyrus Kouandjio, Alabama. We believe Robinson is the best left tackle in the draft due to his intelligence, athleticism and tenacity. He is extremely athletic, possesses long arms which helps in pass protection and he is an outstanding in run blocking. He will be a Pro Bowl left tackle for the next decade. Matthews provides better technique and the bloodlines for success. His father, Bruce, was a Pro Bowl left tackle for many years in the NFL. Matthews has it all – size, experience and athletic ability. He is more ready than Robinson to play right now in the NFL but Robinson offers more upside. Lewan continues the trend of first round left tackles from the Big Ten conference. He has prototype size for an NFL left tackle and turned heads at the combine running a 4.89 40 yard dash. Martin is a versatile left tackle that can also play guard. He gets off the ball well, shows good feet and the ability to bend and move. Kouandjio draft stock may be hurt by questions about arthritis in the knees but no one questions his ability. He possesses elite size and great arm length for an offensive tackle. He anchored the Alabama offensive line along with his brother. He could be a fit for Miami’s offensive line. Other offensive linemen that could go in the first three rounds include: Joel Bitonio, Nevada, Antonio Richardson, Tennessee, Morgan Moses, Virginia, Jack Mewhart, Ohio State, David Yankey, Stanford, Xavier Su’A-Filo, UCLA, Cyril Richardson, Baylor and Gabe Jackson, Mississippi State. Yankey is the best guard prospect in the draft and continues the trend of Stanford guards being drafted in the first round and having success at the NFL level.
3. Defensive Tackle – This is a deep draft for defensive tackles. There are several blue chip prospects in this year’s draft class, but the draft is deep with talent that will allow teams to bolster their defensive lines in the first three rounds. We project that 4-5 defensive tackles may go in the first round including: Timmy Jernigan, Florida State, Aaron Donald, Pittsburgh, Ra’Shede Hageman, Minnesota, Louis Nix, Notre Dame and Stephon Tuiit. All five of these players will immediately upgrade your defensive line. Donald is moving up draft boards due to his combine performance and Senior Bowl performance. He is big, strong, quick and extremely agile and mobile. These traits translate into position flexibility in the NFL. We think he is the best 3-technique defensive tackle in the draft. Jernigan was a dominant defensive tackle for Florida State in their national championship run. He is strong at the point of attack and was difficult to block all year. Hageman is the most athletically gifted defensive tackle to enter the draft in a long time. He is extremely explosive and at 6’6” and 310 pounds he can do a 360 degree dunk in basketball. At the combine, he out jumped some defensive backs with a 35.5 inch vertical. Nix is an ideal nose tackle in a 3-4 scheme. He has excellent strength at the point of attack and has the ability to command double teams. Tuitt offers ideal size for a 3-technique defensive tackle and has tremendous athleticism. Could also fit well as a defensive end in a 3-4 scheme. You will still be able to get significant value in rounds 2 and 3 due to the depth in this draft. Other defensive tackles projected to go in the first three rounds include: Dominque Easley, Florida, Anthony Johnson, LSU, Daquan Jones, Penn State and Will Sutton, Arizona State.
4. Cornerback – The cornerback class has excellent top end talent (Blue Chip) and is a deep draft. Teams looking to improve their secondary will be able to find quality secondary talent in rounds 2 – 4. We could have 6-7 corners drafted in the first round. We believe the best cornerback in this draft is Justin Gilbert of Oklahoma State. He has excellent size coupled with outstanding ball skills. He is a complete corner that will be extremely successful at the next level. He will be a Pro Bowl cornerback in the NFL for many years. We also expect Darqueze Dennard, Michigan State, Jason Verrett, TCU, Bradley Roby, Ohio State, Kyle Fuller, Virginia Tech and Lamarcus Joyner, Florida State to go in the first round. All of these prospects will provide immediate value at the cornerback position for the team drafting them. Dennard is a big, physical corner that has excellent technique. Verrett is a big time athlete running a 4.38 40 and a 39 inch vertical jump. Verrett is moving up draft boards after his Pro Day and combine performance. Roby was arguably the best athlete at the combine, with elite numbers in the 40 (4.39), 10 yard split (1.47) and vertical (38.5 inches). If he puts it together, he could be an elite corner. Fuller is an excellent athlete that was very productive in college. Fuller comes from excellent bloodlines – brothers Vincent and Corey played in the NFL. Joyner provides excellent flexibility with the ability to play safety and corner. Joyner comes in the mold of “Antoine Winfield” and is the best corner in the draft against the run and in blitz packages. Outside of the first round, teams will find outstanding talent in Marcus Roberson, Florida, Stanley Jean Baptiste, Nebraska, Terrance Mitchell, Oregon, Loucheiz Purifoy, Florida, Aaron Colvin, Oklahoma and Chris Davis, Auburn.

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 of these positions.  Several teams have needs at Offensive Line (Guard/Tackle), Defensive Backs (cornerback/safety), Wide Receiver and Defensive Tackle and we see these positions dominating the first 50 picks of the 2014 draft. Cornerback and wide receiver are particularly deep in this draft. The Vikings do not appear to be in the market for a wide receiver or offensive tackle in rounds 1 and 2 so the strengths may indirectly help the Vikings with their needs due to the fact as many as 20 wide receivers and offensive tackles will be taken in the first 40 picks of the draft.

 The strengths of this year’s draft do not align well with the Vikings needs. The Vikings needs going into the 2014 draft include in priority order:

1. Quarterback
2. Linebacker
3. Cornerback
4. Running Back
5. Safety

We see the first 10 picks like this (assuming no trades):

1. **Houston - Jadeveon Clowney, DE, South Carolina.** Clowney is the best player in the draft and Houston will ultimately go with the best player available. The Texans are still evaluating multiple options for this pick and certainly would listen to offers. Clowney combined with J.J. Watt would give Houston a formidable defense. You build your defense from the outside in with corners and defensive ends. This pick would give Houston the best defensive end tandem in the league.
2. **St. Louis Rams - Greg Robinson, OT, Auburn.** The Rams could go with Sammy Watkins but left tackle is a huge need and there are several tackles in this draft worthy of a top 5 pick. If they stay at number 2, we think Robinson fits a pretty good balance equation of major talent and major need. We believe Robinson is the best left tackle in the draft due to his intelligence, athleticism and tenacity. He is extremely athletic, possesses long arms which helps in pass protection and he is an outstanding in run blocking. He will be a Pro Bowl left tackle for the next decade.
3. **Jacksonville Jaguars – Sammy Watkins, WR, Clemson.** The Jaguars will take the best player available here and that is the explosive playmaker from Clemson – Sammy Watkins. He is a tremendous playmaker that is extremely explosive. He can take the top off the defense and led the SEC in YAC (yards after catch) yards. Watkins gives them a dynamic talent, a player who really can help a quarterback, and, given the uncertain future of Justin Blackmon, the depth chart could use Watkins' size and speed combination.
4. **Cleveland – Johnny Manziel, QB, Texas A&M.** The Browns are in a reasonable position to take a quarterback at this spot and still come out of this draft with impact regardless of what they get out of that quarterback early on. Manziel is a playmaker with tremendous upside. He is extremely athletic, excellent football IQ and instincts and most importantly he is a winner. Winning has been a problem in Cleveland. Many have compared him to Favre – not a bad comparison for “Johnny Football”. We believe quarterback needy teams would be foolish to pass on Manziel. The Browns pull the trigger here and do not become fools.
5. **Oakland Raiders – Khalil Mack, LB, Buffalo.** The Raiders are the most unpredictable team in the draft each year, but if they take the best player available the pick will be Khalil Mack. Mack is arguably the best defensive player in this draft. He is a three down linebacker that is very versatile – he can stop the run, rush the passer and drop into coverage. The additions of veteran linemen in free agency don't really diminish the need to find an impact defensive player. Mack's usefulness as a three-down player helps. The Raiders should consider moving down and collecting additional pick assets, as they did last season when they made a first-night deal with Miami.
6. **Atlanta Falcons – Jake Matthews, OT, Texas A&M.** There's been some buzz about Atlanta as a team capable of moving up to take Clowney, but the problem with that is while pass rush is a major need, it doesn't protect the single biggest asset this franchise has, which is Matt Ryan. Atlanta’s offensive line was one of the worst in football last year and this is a major need for the Falcons. Matthews provides excellent technique and footwork for an NFL left tackle. He also provides excellent bloodlines for success. His father, Bruce, was a Pro Bowl left tackle for many years in the NFL. Matthews has it all – size, experience and athletic ability. He is ready to play right now in the NFL and will protect Matt Ryan’s blind side for many years to come.
7. **Tampa Bay Buccaneers – Mike Evans, WR, Texas A&M.** The Buccaneers may consider moving down to get more picks. When you consider how deep the draft is at wide receiver, we think the Bucs would listen here. If they stay put, we think they take the best wide receiver available and that is Mike Evans. Vincent Jackson is 31 years old and entering a season in which, without an addition at wide receiver, he could be facing a ton of attention from defenses. He has excellent size at 6’5” and is a matchup problem for defenses. He isn’t a burner, but he dominates with the ball in the air and is a brutal matchup whether in the SEC or in the NFC South. He can take pressure off Jackson and eventually take his spot.
8. **Anthony Barr, LB, UCLA.** The Vikings continue to rebuild their defense with the selection of Anthony Barr. Barr will provide the Vikings with an explosive playmaker that has been missing for years. A third of Barr’s tackles last year resulted in a loss. The Vikings need to create more big plays and turnovers on defense and Barr will add that dimension at the linebacker position. Barr, who needs some developmental work but got to the quarterback plenty, even while he was figuring it out on defense after a conversion from fullback. Cleaning up your ability to defend the pass doesn't just come through better personnel in the secondary. It can start up front.
9. **Buffalo Bills – Taylor Lewan, OT, Michigan.** The Bills need to upgrade their offensive line with youth and talent. We think Lewan is a good fit based on the need and certainly lines up based on value. He's arguably the best player available here at any position and makes the Bills better. Lewan continues the trend of first round left tackles from the Big Ten conference. He has prototype size for an NFL left tackle and turned heads at the combine running a 4.89 40 yard dash. He's a big plus in the run game and is going to upgrade the protection for E.J. Manuel, which is of the utmost importance.
10. **Detroit Lions – Justin Gilbert, C, Oklahoma State.** The Lions have had a glaring need at cornerback for years. We believe the best cornerback in this draft is Justin Gilbert of Oklahoma State. He would immediately upgrade the Lion’s secondary. He has excellent size coupled with outstanding ball skills. He is a complete corner that will be extremely successful at the next level. He will be a Pro Bowl cornerback in the NFL for many years. Gilbert is also a weapon in the return game and could upgrade Detroit’s special teams.
11. **Tennessee Titans - Darqueze Dennard, C, Michigan State.** The loss of Alterraun Verner is a pretty significant one, and Tennessee is potentially looking at a scenario in which a young guy like Blidi Wreh-Wilson is asked to take on a major role in coverage this season. But that's a player who played in fewer than 100 snaps last season. In other words, the Titans could really use the addition of an experienced, versatile defender who can hold up early and adjust quickly. Dennard is a big, physical corner that has excellent technique. He is the most pro-ready cornerback in the draft and he will fill the void left by Verner in free agency.
12. **New York Giants – Eric Ebron, TE, North Carolina.** The Giants have not had a dominate tight end since Mark Bavaro. In today’s NFL, offenses need a tight end that can stretch the middle of the field. This will help Eli and the offense spread the ball forcing defenses to defend the entire field. Ebron is an excellent tight end that draws comparisons to Vernon Davis of San Francisco. This guy is a difference-maker in the passing game, a long, fast matchup problem with the size to drag corners who try to pull him down after he makes the catch.
13. **St. Louis Rams – Ha Ha Clinton Dix, S, Alabama.** St. Louis needs to upgrade the middle of their defense and they should start by shoring up the back end. Clinton-Dix gives them some needed range and instincts in coverage and a possible pairing with T.J. McDonald would form a strong tandem at safety. Clinton-Dix isn't a big, physical presence, but he's effective coming downhill and making tackles, and he's going to help in coverage.
14. **Chicago Bears – Aaron Donald, DT, Pittsburgh.** The Bears were one of the worst defenses in the NFL last year and they were particularly weak up the middle of their defense at all three levels. The Bears have a huge talent gap at defensive tackle and Donald is the pick here to strengthen the middle of the defense. Donald is moving up draft boards due to his combine performance and Senior Bowl performance. The drop-off from Donald to the next defensive tackle in his mold is enough where I think he gets a little boost, and he also helps out at a pretty significant need spot for the Bears. He is big, strong, quick and extremely agile and mobile. These traits translate into position flexibility in the NFL. We think he is the best 3-technique defensive tackle in the draft.
15. **Pittsburgh Steelers – Zach Martin, OT, Notre Dame.** The Steelers have struggled with their offensive line for years. Last year multiple tackles played on the left side of the line and the Steelers even made a desperate trade with Arizona for Levi Brown that did not work out. They need to fix this revolving door and Martin fills the need but also is one of the best players on the board at this point. He gets off the ball well, shows good feet and the ability to bend and move. Martin is one of the most versatile offensive linemen in the draft, which is pretty useful for the Steelers.
16. **Dallas Cowboys, Calvin Pryor, S, Louisville.**  Dallas needs to think defense in this draft and significantly upgrade the talent in the middle of the defense at all three levels. The Cowboys need not just one safety, but two. We know defensive line is a pretty big need here for Dallas, but it's a big leap to target either defensive tackle or an edge-rusher here. Pryor would be an immediate starter at a position of need and would provide some playmaking ability in the back end of the Cowboy’s defense.
17. **Baltimore Ravens, Kelvin Benjamin, WR, Florida State.** The Ravens added Steve Smith but they need to add playmakers on the outside that are not on the other side of 30 years old. Torrey Smith needs other talent around him to force the defense to defend all players in the Raven’s offense. Benjamin is the kind of option they would love to have because of his size and the ability to create matchup problems for the defense. Benjamin is a bit of a project on the technical side, but he's a matchup nightmare from a physical standpoint and gives the Ravens something they really don't have at wide receiver. Benjamin would be a great complement to Torrey Smith.
18. **New York Jets - Odell Beckham Jr., WR, LSU.** The Jets need to add playmakers to their offense. Mark Sanchez was not the only problem in New York – he did not have anyone to throw to. Unless the Jets upgrade the playmakers on the outside, the same result could happen with Geno Smith or Michael Vick. We know New York could go elsewhere here and count on the option of a good pass-catcher later on, but unless there's a cornerback the Jets love at this spot, we like this pick for the Jets. Beckham could develop into a star here. He's explosive with the ball in his hands, but you don't have to simply force easy catches, because he's a very good route-runner and will create space.
19. **Miami Dolphins – Cyrus Kouandjio, OT, Alabama.** Miami’s offensive line needs to be rebuilt after the Jonathan Martin scandal. They lost three starting offensive linemen and they need to use their first round pick to begin the rebuilding process. Otherwise, Ryan Tannehill will not have much of a chance. Kouandjio draft stock may be hurt by questions about arthritis in the knees but no one questions his ability. He possesses elite size and great arm length for an offensive tackle. He anchored the Alabama offensive line along with his brother. He would be a good fit for Miami’s offensive line.
20. **Arizona Cardinals – Blake Bortles, QB, Central Florida.** The Cardinal’s need to find a long-term answer at quarterback. There isn't a good No. 2 behind Carson Palmer, who will turn 35 during the 2014 season. Bortles in some people’s opinion is the best quarterback in the draft. He possesses ideal size and a big arm. Bortles has been compared to “Big Ben” – not a bad comparison. He is a very good athlete with excellent pocket instincts and can benefit from his ability to create some yards with his legs, as we've seen from a few other young quarterbacks recently. He can make all the throws at the NFL level and will benefit working with Carson Palmer. The Cardinals have some needs, but not massive ones, and last year's first-rounder, Jonathan Cooper, will return from injury in 2014.
21. **Green Bay Packers – Ryan Shazier, LB, Ohio State.** The Packers need defense period! They get one of the more instinctive defensive players in the draft, and they fill a void at linebacker next to A.J. Hawk with another Buckeye. Shazier is that modern linebacker who will play a little lighter but can shoot gaps upfield and also get through the trash and make plays sideline to sideline. He's also going to cover for you. We like Shazier and he is one of the better playmakers on defense in this draft. If you watch Ohio State tape from the past two seasons, Shazier is consistently playing faster than everyone else.
22. **Philadelphia Eagles –Brandin Cooks, WR, Oregon State.** The Eagles need to find a replacement for DeSean Jackson. While Jackson wasn't a player the Eagles' brass wanted around, defenses will be in better position to slow down Kelly's attack unless the Eagles can add another tool in the passing game. Plus, seeing Jackson twice a year in a Redskins uniform will not easily erase the memory of Jackson in the Fan’s eyes. Drafting Cooks could erase the memory of DeSean Jackson stay in Philadelphia. The Biletnikoff award winner offers tremendous speed, quickness and productivity catching 128 passes for 1,730 yards and 17 TDs. He is the next “Percy Harvin” with better route running and receiving skills. That makes him precisely the kind of matchup the Eagles need to add to the passing game.
23. **Kansas City Chiefs – Marquise Lee, WR, USC.** The Chiefs had a successful year last year due to a strong defense and not making mistakes on offense. They need to add explosiveness and playmakers on offense in order to take the next step. Kansas City is a "win-now" team on the personnel side despite a huge leap in 2013 -- and Lee comes in as a possible steal, given his uneven junior season after he'd firmly established his value for evaluators. Lee had a subpar season but his sophomore season he was the best receiver in college football. Lee is explosive and has a terrific burst and quickness with the ball in his hands.
24. **Cincinnati Bengals – Kony Ealy, DE, Missouri.** The Bengals need to find a replacement for Michael Johnson in this draft. They also have a pretty big need in the secondary, particularly at cornerback, at which they have Leon Hall, Adam Jones and Terence Newman all playing roles. None of them is young by NFL standards. The pick here is Ealy. He will fill the void created by the departure of Johnson. Ealy is an athletic defensive end who fits the system. The Bengals have done a good job developing defensive linemen, and Ealy is next in line. He's certainly an athlete with upside.
25. **San Diego Chargers – Kyle Fuller, Virginia Tech.** The Chargers have a big need at cornerback and Fuller immediately upgrades the secondary for the Chargers. Fuller is an excellent athlete that was very productive in college. Fuller comes from excellent bloodlines – brothers Vincent and Corey played in the NFL. Fuller is ready to play right now and will become an immediate starter for the Chargers.
26. **Cleveland Browns - C.J. Mosley, LB, Alabama.** The Browns need a middle linebacker to replace the departure of D’Qwell Jackson. Mosley is the best player available here and fills a need for the Browns. Mosley is a three down middle linebacker that can stop the run and drop into coverage effectively. He is very athletic and instinctive and provides the leadership skills to lead a defense. Injuries are a concern but the value here is hard to pass up.
27. **New Orleans Saints, Cody Latimer, WR, Indiana.** Latimer could go higher based on what we have seen. However, the Saints have a need for a playmaker in the passing game and Latimer will provide Drew Brees with “blue chip” talent that will make the saint’s offense even more dangerous. Adding a weapon for Drew Brees makes sense with this pick.
28. **Carolina Panthers, Morgan Moses, OT, Virginia.** Carolina has glaring needs at wide receiver and in the secondary but they also need to find a replacement for Jordon Gross. Moses will be an immediate starter at left tackle and anytime you can get a starter at tackle, it's a pretty good pick. The additions of Jerricho Cotchery and Jason Avant aren't a fix, but given the Panthers' needs, the value here makes sense.
29. **New England Patriots – Ra’Shede Hageman, DT, Minnesota.** Vince Wilfork is 32 years old and Tommy Kelly is 33, and, while they have a decent rotation given all the reps they gave to rookies last season, nobody on the depth chart offers the upside of Hageman. The onetime tight end recruit brings a great deal of athleticism and will offer immediate help in the rotation behind that top pairing. Hageman is the most athletically gifted defensive tackle to enter the draft in a long time. He is extremely explosive and at 6’6” and 310 pounds he can do a 360 degree dunk in basketball. At the combine, he out jumped some defensive backs with a 35.5 inch vertical. If Belicheck can get Hageman to play consistently for all four quarters, he will be a disruptive factor and make many pro bowls.
30. **San Francisco 49ers – Jordon Matthews, WR, Vanderbilt.**  The 49ers were looking to upgrade the talent and depth of the wide receiver position in free agency. They now accomplish this objective in the draft. Matthews is a player that can contribute early, and, while Anquan Boldin returns and Michael Crabtree is healthy, the wide receiver position is still a clear need spot. Matthews is a reliable pass-catcher who can make plays on contested passes and is also capable of hitting a second gear when he has room to run after the catch.
31. **Denver Broncos, Jason Verrett, CB, TCU.** Aqib Talib's presence helps, but Denver is still in need of talent at cornerback. Verrett can really cover, will come in capable of making plays on the ball in coverage and is also a willing tackler in space and near the line of scrimmage against the run. What he lacks in size and length he makes up for in instincts, ball skills and in his ability to play both the pass-catcher and the quarterback. Verrett is a big time athlete running a 4.38 40 and a 39 inch vertical jump. Verrett is moving up draft boards after his Pro Day and combine performance.
32. **Seattle Seahawks – Stephon Tuitt, DE, Notre Dame.** Seattle’s strength last year on their way to winning the Super Bowl was their front seven, particularly the defensive line. They lost both depth and talent due to free agency. Given Seattle's proficiency in developing talent on the defensive side of the ball, Tuitt is an enticing talent here because he played hurt last season and didn't show all he's capable of. He also brings both size and quickness they could utilize from a scheme standpoint. Seattle doesn't have the same depth on the defensive line that it did in the midst of the Super Bowl run, and Tuitt can be both an effective run-stopper and a disruptive power pass-rusher.

In terms of the Vikings, they will be able to take the best player in the draft due to the additions they made in free agency. We see four alternatives that could unfold in the first round:

1. Take the best Defensive Tackle – Drafting Aaron Donald will continue the rebuilding of the defensive line with young talent. Donald is moving up draft boards due to his combine performance and Senior Bowl performance. He is big, strong, quick and extremely agile and mobile. These traits translate into position flexibility in the NFL. We think he is the best 3-technique defensive tackle in the draft. He will be available at pick number 8.
2. Take the Best Linebacker – At pick number 8, there may be three options at linebacker for the Vikings. They are Khalil Mack, Buffalo, Anthony Barr, UCLA and C.J. Mosley, Alabama. If Mack is there at number 8, this is a “no brainer”. He is arguably the best defensive player in this draft. Barr is a former running back that is extremely athletic and explosive. He has only been playing linebacker for a few years so may make more time to develop, but offers the most upside. Mosley is a three down middle linebacker that can stop the run and drop into coverage. The Vikings have not had that since E.J. Henderson.
3. Take the best cornerback – the top two corners are Justin Gilbert from Oklahoma State and Darqueze Dennard from Michigan State. Both cornerbacks will be available at pick number 8. We believe the best cornerback in this draft is Justin Gilbert of Oklahoma State. He has excellent size coupled with outstanding ball skills. He is a complete corner that will be extremely successful at the next level. He will be a Pro Bowl cornerback in the NFL for many years. Dennard is a big, physical corner that has excellent technique. He is the most pro-ready of any of the cornerbacks in this draft.
4. Take the best quarterback – The Vikings have a need to find a franchise quarterback which is a daunting task for most teams. There may be up to four quarterbacks taken in the first round including Johnny Manziel from Texas A&M, Blake Bortles from Central Florida, Teddy Bridgewater from Louisville and Derek Carr from Fresno State. If Manziel is there the Vikings should take him. We believe any team with a quarterback need will look foolish passing on “Johnny Football”. He is extremely athletic and has the instincts, intelligence and leadership to win in the NFL. Bridgewater’s stock is falling due to a poor performance at his Pro Day. Bortles has been compared to “Big Ben” in Pittsburgh – not a bad comparison. However, he may need more time to develop. Carr is an intriguing prospect that has caught the eye of several teams. He is sure to go in the first round with a team drafting between picks 20-32. Each of these prospects have questions. There is no Andrew Luck or Peyton Manning in this draft but there is talent and the depth at the quarterback position is good. As a result, teams may wait until the second or third round to draft a signal caller. We do not believe there is a significant separation between the first tier and second tier of quarterbacks and the Vikings can get value in round 2 or 3. Many of the top quarterbacks will go in the final 10 picks of the first round and the first 10 picks in the second round.

The Vikings could trade out of pick number 8 and get more picks later in the draft. We think they will stay put and draft the best player available. Khalil Mack will not be there at pick number but if he is the Vikings will take him. We think the choices will come down to Blake Bortles, QB, Central Florida, Anthony Barr, LB, UCLA, Aaron Donald, DT, Pittsburgh, Justin Gilbert, CB, Oklahoma State and C.J. Mosley, LB, Alabama. We believe the Vikings will continue to rebuild their defense and select Anthony Barr, LB, UCLA. The quarterbacks in this draft will continue to fall with many dropping to the second round. Barr will provide the Vikings with an explosive playmaker that has been missing for years. A third of Barr’s tackles last year resulted in a loss. The Vikings need to create more big plays and turnovers on defense and Barr will add that dimension to the Vikings defense at the linebacker position.

They will then target cornerback, quarterback, guard or defensive tackle in rounds 2 and 3.

In terms of the Vikings, we see three alternatives that could unfold in the second round:

1. Take the best quarterback (depending on what they do in the first round). This could include: Jimmy Garoppolo, Eastern Illinois, Zach Mettenberger, LSU, Teddy Bridgewater, Louisville or Derek Carr, Fresno State (they may have to move up to get Carr).
2. Take the best Cornerback available. This could include: Lamarcus Joyner, Florida State, Kyle Fuller, Virginia, Marcus Roberson, Florida, Terrance Mitchell, Oregon, Loucheiz Purifoy, Florida
3. Take the Best Linebacker available – Kyle Van Noy, BYU, Trent Murphy, LB, Stanford, Shane Skov, LB, Stanford
4. Guard or Defensive tackle – The Vikings could draft Timmy Jernigan, DT, Florida State or Xavier Su’a-Filo, G, UCLA if they do not take a QB, CB or LB in the second round.

We think scenario it will come down to a choice between (depending on their first round choice): Jimmy Garoppolo, QB, Eastern Illinois, Zach Mettenberger, QB, LSU, Lamarcus Joyner, CB, Florida State, Kyle Van Noy, LB, BYU or Trent Murphy, LB, Stanford.

Based on our projected first round pick of Anthony Barr, our pick is Zach Mettenberger, QB, LSU. We would prefer Garrapolo here but we believe the Vikings and Norv Turner have fell in love with Mettenberg’s size and arm strength. He can make all the throws at the NFL level but he has limited mobility. Mettenberger has size, stature and arm strength similar to Ryan Mallet.

This draft will continue to infuse young talent on both sides of the ball for the Vikings. This is a pick that fills a need while at the same time fits into the best-athlete-available mantra the Vikings have maintained. If they choose Blake Bortles in the first round, the Vikings will then look to Lamarcus Joyner, CB, Florida State or Kyle Van Noy, LB, BYU. Trent Murphy, LB, Stanford could also be an option in round 2 if the Vikings do not select Barr in the first round.

Options in round 3 that the Vikings could draft (the Vikings have two picks in the 3rd round due to the Percy Harvin trade):

1. **Kareem Martin, DE, North Carolina:** Martin is an extremelyathletic and long defense end that will fit in Mike Zimmer’s defense. He ran a 4.72 (40) with a 35.5 inch vertical at the combine. He is 6’6”/272 with long arms and the speed to close. Similar to Michael Johnson who played defensive end in Mike Zimmer’s defense.
2. **Tre Mason, RB, Auburn:** Mason was extremely productive in college. He is a thee down back at the next level. He is hard to find because he runs so low, has incredible balance and vision and runs with deceptive power for a small back. Mason’s quick and can start and stop on a dime, then take off.
3. **Donte Moncrief, WR, Ole Miss:** Moncrief is a tremendous athlete who was extremely productive in college. He is an impressive wide receiver with nice physical attributes. Moncrief ran a 4.4 (40), posted a 39.5” vertical jump and an 11’ broad jump. This athleticism combined with 6’2”/221 size will have many teams interested in the second and third rounds.
4. **Arron Murray, QB, Georgia:** Murray’s draft stock was hurt due to a torn ACL in his senior year. He is making a nice recovery as demonstrated at his Pro day but injury concerns may concern teams. Aside from the injury, Murray was one of the nest quarterbacks in college football. He was a 4 year starter that played in a Pro-style offense in the SEC conference. He set many Georgia and SEC records in his 4 year career. If he recovers from his ACL surgery, he could be the steal of the draft.
5. **Josh Mauro, DE, Stanford:** Mauro emerged as a key contributor in 2012, registering 6.0 sacks and 19 tackles, including 5.0 for loss. Mauro caped his career earning honorable mention All-Pac-12 honors as a senior, and was selected to the East-West Shrine Game after finishing with 51 tackles, 12.5 for loss, 4.0 sacks, an interception, a pass break up, two passes defensed and two forced fumbles. Physical tackler who arrives with a thud and wraps his arms securely for the reliable take-down. Alert defender who gets his hands into passing lanes. High effort player who hustles down the line of scrimmage in an effort to make the play. Projects best as a five-technique defensive end.
6. **Ed Reynolds, S, Stanford:** Reynolds is a hard hitting safety. He was a two time all American and led the cardinal’s defense with 6 interceptions in 2012, including 3 returned for touchdown. He has excellent bloodlines too. His father, Ed, played 10 seasons in the NFL as a defensive lineman for the Patriots and Giants..
7. **Craig Loston, S, LSU:** Poston is a hard hitting safety for a program that has churned out NFL defensive backs in assembly line fashion. Loston is a fearless, attacking, downhill player. He ran a 4.67 40 yard dash at the combine and some teams will be concerned about his speed.
8. **Gabe Jackson, G, Mississippi State:** Jackson was a four year starter and two time All-American and two time All-SEC player at guard. He has good length and strength which are prerequisites for a guard. He is a mauler in the run game which would bode well for Adrian Peterson.
9. **Bishop Sankey, RB, Washington:** Sankey had a big season last year, rushing for 1,870 yards including three 200 yard games. He tested well at the combine with a 4.49 (40), 35.5” vertical jump and 26 reps at 225 pounds. Those numbers show speed, strength, quickness and explosion – all traits you look for in a running back.
10. **Trai Turner, G, LSU:** Turner's powerful blocking at right guard played a key role in the progress LSU made in its first season under offensive coordinator Cam Cameron in 2013. For his play, Turner earned Second Team All-SEC honors in his first full season as a starter. Turner is a powerful drive blocker who can dominate in the phone booth. His girth and long arms make him difficult to get around in pass protection, but a lack of balance and lateral agility make him susceptible to quick defensive tackles. Turner could have used more refining before making the jump to the NFL, but the traits to develop are in place.
11. **Cyril Richardson, G, Baylor:** Richardson was a first team All-American and the Big 12 offensive lineman of the year. He is massive at 6’5”/329 and has the length of a big offensive tackle.
12. **Stanley Jean Baptiste, CB, Nebraska:** Jean-Baptiste earns obvious comparisons to Richard Sherman. He is tall 6’3”/218 and started his college career as a receiver. He made the move to defense in his sophomore season. As a senior, he was second team All-Big Ten with four interceptions. He is not a burner (4.61 in the 40) but he is incredibly explosive (41.5 inch vertical).
13. **Deone Bucannon, S, Washington State:** Bucannon is an imposing figure, built more in the lines of a Cover-2 linebacker, as he stands 6-foot-1 and weighs in at 211 pounds. At the 2014 NFL Scouting Combine, Bucannon put up the 225-pound bar 19 times during the bench press test, third-best for the defensive backs in attendance. Bucannon brings speed to the safety position recording a 4.49 (40) and a vertical jump of 36 inches. Bucannon tallied 384 hits in 49 appearances, the fourth-best total in school history and fifth-best among the major colleges’ active players. Bucannon added 15 interceptions and 7 forced fumbles, third-best ever by a Cougar, running them back for 170 yards.
14. **Carl Bradford, LB, Arizona State:** Bradford was first team all PAC-12 in 2013 when he led Arizona State with 8.5 sacks and 19 tackles for loss with three forced fumbles. Over his final two seasons his 40.5 tackles for loss was fourth in the nation. He is a big hitter with serious closing speed.

Options in round 4 that the Vikings could draft – this is where you start to build your team:

1. **Terrance West, RB, Towson.:** West ended up walking on at Towson where he worked his way onto the field and rushed for 1,294 yards in a back-up role in 2011, setting the FCS freshman touchdown record (29). West saw more playing time in 2012, but re-wrote the record books in 2013 as a junior when he finished with a FCS-record 2,509 rushing yards and 41 rushing scores, earning multiple All-American honors and finishing third in the voting for the Walter Payton Award. Despite his numbers coming at the FCS-level, his career production is impressive with 4,854 rushing yards and 84 touchdowns in only three seasons, becoming a rare FCS underclassman to leave early. West is built very well and delivers hits with his natural power and initial momentum, staying light on his feet and finishing strong. He lacks elite athletic traits, but he is reminiscent of Joique Bell and fits a similar type of role where he can offer a nice power compliment. There are several teams interested in West, including the Vikings.
2. **Andre Williams, RB, Boston College:** Williams would provide the Vikings with a great 1-2 punch at running back. He rushed for 2,177 yards and led the nation in rushing. He is a powerful back that is best between the tackles and is strong with deceptive speed. He can be a workhouse back at the next level.
3. **Telvin Smith, LB, Florida State:** Smith was the leader of the top ranked Florida State defense. He is undersized but ran a 4.52 (40) at the combine. He was honorable mention All-American after a senior season of 90 tackles, including 9.5 for losses.
4. **Chris Smith, DE, Arkansas:** Smith had a big junior season with 9.5 sacks and 13 TFLs. He followed that with 8.5 sacks and 11.5 TFLs as a senior to earn second team All-SEC. He is neither tall nor fast but he knows how to get to the quarterback.
5. **Jackson Jeffcoat, DE, Texas:** Jeffcoat was a first team All-American, Big 12 defensive player of the year and winner of the Ted Hendricks award as the nation’s top defensive end. He led the team in tackles (86), TFLs (22), sacks (13) and quarterback pressures (19). He has excellent bloodlines – his father, Jim, played defensive end for 15 seasons playing for the Cowboys and Bills.
6. **Demarcus Lawrence, DE, Boise State:** Lawrence is a high-energy type player in the mold of former Pittsburgh Steelers All-Pro [James Harrison](http://min.scout.com/a.z?s=63&p=8&c=1&nid=6995295), as both play with reckless abandon. The Broncos standout has wreaked havoc in opposing backfields since he first arrived on campus as a transfer from Butler Community College, where he was an All-American selection. Despite playing just two seasons in the major college ranks and for the Broncos, he managed to etch his name into the school and league record books. His 20 sacks rank sixth in Mountain West Conference annals and tied for seventh on the BSU chart. He also placed 14th in school history with 34.0 tackles behind the line of scrimmage. As a junior, he set the league record with 20.5 stops-for-loss and his 10.5 sacks in 2013 rank fifth on both the BSU and MWC lists.
7. [**David Fluellen**](http://min.scout.com/a.z?s=63&p=8&c=1&nid=7575075)**, Jr., RB, University of Toledo:**  The New York native ventured to [Ohio](http://ohio.scout.com/) four years ago, patiently waiting two seasons for his opportunity to be the featured back for the Rockets. To say that he seized that chance as a junior and senior would be an understatement. He exploded for 1,498 yards on the ground during in 2012, the fifth-best season total in school history. Limited to just nine games as a senior, he still managed to amass 1,121 yards.
8. **Preston Brown, LB, Louisville:** Brown is a prototypical middle linebacker in a 4-3 scheme. He was extremely productive in college and led the Cardinals top ranked defense in tackles and TFLs (Tackles for Loss). He would provide depth at the middle linebacker and could become a starter at the next level.
9. **Chris Borland, LB, Wisconsin:** Borland is one of the top linebackers in Big Ten history. He won the Big Ten’s Nagurski-Woodson defensive player of the year award as a senior, and finished his career with 420 and a conference record tying 15 forced fumbles.

Options in the Second Day (Rounds 5-7):

1. Brock Vereen, C/S, Minnesota
2. Caraun Reid, DE, Princeton
3. Justin Ellis, DT, Louisiana Tech
4. David Fales, QB, San Jose State
5. Tom Savage, QB, Pittsburgh
6. Jerrick Mckinnion, RB, Georgia Southern
7. Max Bullough, LB, Michigan State
8. Jordan Zumwalt, LB, UCLA
9. Chris Davis, CB, Auburn
10. Keith Mcgill, CB, Utah
11. Jared Abbredaris WR
12. Seantreal Henderson, OT, Miami (dropped due to drug Test)
13. Billy Turner OT, NDSU
14. Vinnie Sunseri S Alabama
15. James White RB Wisconsin
16. David Yankey, G, Stanford
17. Khairi Fortt OLB Cal

Sleepers:

1. Connor Shaw, QB, South Carolina
2. Brett Smith, QB, Wyoming
3. Billy Turner, T, North Dakota State
4. Beau Allen, DT, Wisconsin
5. Zach Moore, DE, Concordia-St. Paul
6. Larry Webster, DE, Bloomsburg
7. Walk Aikens, C, Liberty

We really like Smith and Turner as sleepers. Both are great talents from small schools.

The Vikings have picks in every round this year including two picks in the third round. They can fill find depth needs in several areas in this draft. Most notably, the Vikings needs are:

* Quarterback
* Linebacker
* Cornerback
* Running Back
* Safety

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

Mink and Obey from Radio City, NYC!