The Mink is off to another trip to Chicago 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.

**DRAFT NOTE: The Dolphins may move up in the draft to take** [**Ezekiel Elliott**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/50025/ezekiel-elliott)**, RB, Ohio State. Cleveland will also use their ammunition to move up in the draft.**

This draft is again one of the deepest drafts in recent memory due to a large number of juniors declaring for the draft – 96 in total, which are two off the record of 98 juniors in 2014. 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. The top end of this draft offers “blue chip” prospects but there is a drop in talent after the first 10 - 15 picks. This draft 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 2-4 due to the depth of this draft.

We expect movement in the first half of the first round, particularly the top ten. We have already seen two trades and there is interest by many teams in moving up in the draft. Many teams covet the top defensive tackles, offensive tackles and playmakers 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 2016 draft include:

1. 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 to four rounds. We project that 4-5 defensive tackles may go in the first round including: Shelden Rankins, DT, Louisville, Andrew Billings, DT, Baylor, Jarran Reed, DT, Alabama, A’Shawn Robinson, DT, Alabama. All of these players will immediately upgrade your defensive line. Rankins is the number one rated defensive tackle and will go in the first 15 picks. Rankins is one of the better run defenders in this draft class and continues to grow as a pass rusher. He entered Senior Bowl week with first-round grades and he only helped himself there with a dominating week. If Billings’s technique and discipline can catch up to his natural brawling strength and mentality, Billings flashes dominant qualities. A scheme-versatile prospect, he will be valued as a nose tackle by odd fronts and a one-technique tackle by even fronts. Billings compares to Bennie Logan, DT, Philadelphia Eagles - Similar to Logan, Billings isn't the most physically impressive lineman, but he is built low to the ground with a powerful base that will fit both even and odd fronts. Alabama again has two first round prospects in Reed and Robinson. Reed is country strong with tree trunks for thighs and long arms, Reed is a classic two-gap run-stuffer stout enough to play inside at defensive tackle or outside at end. At 6-3, 311 pounds, Reed has the girth and strength to line up virtually anywhere along the defensive line, making him a fit for 3-4 and 4-3 teams, alike. Reed compares to Dan Williams, DT, Oakland Raiders - Reed and Williams are well-built, nimble nose tackles who are capable of shutting down the run, appealing to various NFL schemes. Robinson is a stout run defender but is raw as a pass rusher. His production doesn't always show on the stat sheet - was mostly asked to two-gap, clog things up and occupy blockers to free up the linebackers at Alabama. He is the poster prospect for the golden rule of scouting (traits over production). He compares to Michael Brockers, DT, Los Angeles Rams - Although he doesn't have a sky-high ceiling, Robinson should start in the NFL for a long time as a three-down defender, fitting even and odd fronts, similar to Michael Brockers when he was a mid-first round pick out of LSU.
2. Wide Receiver – The last few years have been incredibly good for wide receivers. This year’s class does not offer as many blue chip prospects but is extremely deep in talent. We expect 4-5 wide receivers to go in the first round and you will be able to get great value in rounds 2-4 in this draft. There are several blue chip prospects at wide receiver. The cream of the crop is Corey Coleman from Baylor. He is a tremendous playmaker that is extremely explosive in the open field. He possesses sub 4.4 speed and can take the top off the defense. We expect Coleman to be the first wide receiver taken. The next wide receiver is Laquan Treadwell of Mississippi. He is a strong, physical receiver that makes the tough catch in traffic. He is not a burner (4.63 40) but offers tremendous size for a receiver. He put up tremendous production and led the SEC in every receiving category last year. Treadwell could go to the Vikings at 23. The next wide receiver drafted in the first round is Josh Doctson, WR, TCU. Since transferring from Wyoming, Doctson has developed into one of the most acrobatic receivers in the nation. He has excellent size at 6’3” and showed off his athletic ability at the combine by posting a 4.5 40 yard dash and a 40” vertical jump. He is a matchup problem for defenses and has the highest upside of any receiver in this draft. Will Fuller will be the next receiver taken. He is the most explosive wide receiver in the draft (4.32 40) and made many big plays at Notre Dame. Some question his ability to consistently catch the ball due to his small hands but he was extremely productive for the Irish.
3. Offensive Tackle – This is a deep offensive tackle draft with three blue chip prospects that could 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. There is one word that describes this year’s class “Size”. This year’s class is led by tackles Laremy Tunsil, Mississippi, Ronnie Stanley, Notre Dame, Jack Conklin, Michigan State, Taylor Decker, Ohio State and Jason Spriggs, Indiana. The crème of the crop is Laremy Tunsil. On the field, Tunsil is a nimble big man with a rare athletic skill-set for the position, showing above average balance and flexibility to easily bend, handle speed and absorb power at the point of attack. He's not a perfect player, but his flaws are more nitpicking than true weaknesses and potential injuries are the only obstacles keeping Tunsil from being one of the better left tackles at the next level. Stanley lacks technical refinement and will struggle initially in the NFL as he learns the finer points to the game, but he has the size, length and athletic ability that few his size possess, which is why he'll be drafted high. Conklin is powerful and quick-minded to read/react in a flash and dominate in tight spaces, but he doesn't have the quick-twitch body control to consistently mirror in space. He's not a top-shelf athlete and will struggle with edge speed at times, but no one is going through him due to his wide base and contact balance. He is always in a ready position and rarely seems surprised, which compensates for his lack of elite quickness in pass protection. Conklin is well-coached, physical and a natural competitor, which makes him NFL ready from Day One. Decker started the last 42 games for the Buckeyes, splitting time between left and right tackle, and was part of a senior class that won 50 games at Ohio State. He had a rough debut against Buffalo's Khalil Mack (Oakland Raider top-five pick in the 2014 NFL Draft) in his first career start, but has been an ascending talent since, learning from past mistakes and developing his skill-set. He has reliable character, a can-do attitude and pro-ready make-up that fits NFL locker rooms. Decker can struggle at times with speed off the edge, especially flexible rushers who can bend underneath him, but he has the frame, balance and forceful hands to neutralize quickness and control the point of attack. Although he doesn't have a high ceiling, Decker projects as an immediate starter at tackle or guard. Spriggs is a former tight end who has maintained his athleticism while getting bigger and stronger to start the past four years at left tackle for the Hoosiers. Quick and agile, Spriggs is very effective blocking on the move and has the length and balance to mirror in pass protection. He's not particularly stout, however, and may struggle acclimating to the power he'll face in the NFL.

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), Wide Receiver and Defensive Tackle and we see these positions dominating the first 50 picks of the 2016 draft. Defensive Tackles and Wide Receiver are particularly deep in this draft.

The Vikings needs going into the 2016 draft include in priority order:

* Wide Receiver
* Offensive Line
* Safety
* Depth at Cornerback

The Vikings had a playoff caliber defense last year but need to surround Teddy Bridgewater with playmakers. We need to provide Bridgewater with a big target that can stretch the field for this offense to take the next step.

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

1. [**Los Angeles Rams**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/la/los-angeles-rams) **-** [**Jared Goff**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49986/jared-goff)**, QB, California**

You don’t move up to the number one pick and not take a quarterback. After making the move from No. 15 all the way up to No. 1, it seems the worst-kept secret in the world that L.A. is going to pick Goff. The Rams are an ideal landing spot for the Cal product. With a great defense and run-first offense, Goff won't be asked to carry the team from day one.

2. [**Philadelphia Eagles**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/phi/philadelphia-eagles) **-** [**Carson Wentz**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49988/carson-wentz)**, QB, North Dakota State**

The Eagles traded up from No. 8 to No. 2 with the goal of getting whichever quarterback Los Angeles passes on. All signs point to that being Wentz. Big, strong and athletic, he'll face a steep learning curve coming from the FCS, but he has a high ceiling if developed properly. Pairing him with QB guru Doug Pederson would be a great fit. This trade has created a great deal of uncertainty with Sam Bradford.

3. [**San Diego Chargers**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/sd/san-diego-chargers) **-** [**Jalen Ramsey**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49428/jalen-ramsey)**, DB, Florida State**

Protecting Philip Rivers would seem like the bigger priority, so [Laremy Tunsil](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49918/laremy-tunsil) and [Ronnie Stanley](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49919/ronnie-stanley) are distinct possibilities. But Ramsey is one of the best pure football players in this class, Ramsey is a true difference-maker. The Chargers have a need at safety due to the departure of Eric Weddle, which he could fill, while also contributing as a corner. Be on the lookout for Miami as they love Elliott and know they need to move ahead of Dallas if they want to land him.

4. [**Dallas Cowboys**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/dal/dallas-cowboys) **-** [**Ezekiel Elliott**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/50025/ezekiel-elliott)**, RB, Ohio State**

The Cowboys have been searching for a replacement for Emmitt Smith ever since he retired. Elliott may be the best running back to come out of the draft since Adrian Peterson in 2007 and he is a perfect fit to play behind Dallas' elite offensive line. He has the skill set to be an every-down RB from day one.

5. [**Jacksonville Jaguars**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/jax/jacksonville-jaguars) **- Joey Bosa, DE, Ohio State**

This Jaguars defense needs a lot of work, and Bosa has the technique and tenacity to be a difference-maker in Gus Bradley's scheme. He's a versatile 4-3 base DE who can kick inside and rush the passer in sub-package situations.

6. [**Baltimore Ravens**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/bal/baltimore-ravens) **- Laremy Tunsil, OT, Mississippi**

The Ravens lost some talent along the offensive line in free agency and they need to protect Joe Flacco. Some teams are cooling a little bit on Laremy Tunsil, but we think he is one of those players that do not come along very often. Tunsil is an extremely athletic offensive lineman that possesses the size to play left tackle. He will be a fixture on the Ravens offensive line for the next 10 years and has the skillset to be a perennial all pro.

7. [**San Francisco 49ers**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/sf/san-francisco-49ers) **- Ronnie Stanley, OT, Notre Dame**

Chip Kelly loves athletic offensive linemen, and Stanley provides that. His long arms (35½ inches) and athletic skill set bode well for his eventual development into an NFL left tackle. He provides the 49ers with a significant upgrade to their offensive line.

**8.** [**Cleveland Browns**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/cle/cleveland-browns) **-** [**DeForest Buckner**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49518/deforest-buckner)**, DE, Oregon**

The Browns need to significantly upgrade their front 7 on defense. This would be a perfect fit for the Browns. Buckner has some versatility, but he's best suited to play 3-4 DE, which just so happens to be one of Cleveland's biggest needs. Buckner is disruptive against the run and plays with a great motor.

9. [**Tampa Bay Buccaneers**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/tb/tampa-bay-buccaneers) **-** [**Jack Conklin**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49920/jack-conklin)**, OT, Michigan State**

Look out for a trade at this spot. Tennessee could move up from No. 15 to get a tackle like Conklin to protect [Marcus Mariota](http://espn.go.com/nfl/player/_/id/2576980/marcus-mariota). However, we think Tampa Bay stays put and selects Conklin. The Bucs have a need here and Conklin may be the best value on the board.

10. [**New York Giants**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/nyg/new-york-giants) **– Myles Jack, LB, UCLA**

The Giants spent big in the offseason to improve their front four and secondary, but they still need to get a few more linebackers who can cover sideline-to-sideline against the run. It would mark the first time since Carl Banks in 1984 that the Giants drafted a linebacker in Round 1. Jack tore up his knee last year otherwise he would have been a sure fire top 5 pick and the next great UCLA LB the past 3 years (Barr and Kendricks with MN).

11. [**Chicago Bears**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/chi/chicago-bears) **-** [**Leonard Floyd**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49876/leonard-floyd)**, OLB, Georgia**

The Bears need to continue to revamp their defense and get players that can play in Fagio’s 3-4 defensive scheme. Floyd is one of the hottest players in the draft right now. Oakland would love him at No. 14, and the Giants could take him at No. 10. With upper-tier athleticism for the position, Floyd would give the Bears a high-ceiling pass-rusher off the edge.

12. [**New Orleans Saints**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/no/new-orleans-saints) **-** [**Sheldon Rankins**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49651/sheldon-rankins)**, DT, Louisville**

Getting stronger along the front four should be the Saints' biggest priority in this draft. Enter Rankins, who has very good quickness and lower-body explosiveness. An exceptional run defender, he flashed as a pass-rusher in his final two college seasons (14.0 sacks).

13. [**Miami Dolphins**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/mia/miami-dolphins) **-** [**Shaq Lawson**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49519/shaq-lawson)**, DE, Clemson**

The Dolphins lost some talent to rush the passer in free agency. Our pick is Shaq Lawson to fill that need. Lawson, who led the FBS last season with 25.5 tackles for loss, playing with a good mixture of relentlessness, technique and discipline. He does his best work against the run and would be a perfect fit for Miami's 4-3 scheme.

14. [**Oakland Raiders**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/oak/oakland-raiders) **-** [**Reggie Ragland**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49756/reggie-ragland)**, ILB, Alabama**

The Raiders need to get tougher up the middle of their defense. Ragland is a complete football player who has the size, speed, power and toughness to thrive as the middle linebacker in a 4-3. He will provide the Raiders with toughness and leadership.

15. [**Tennessee Titans**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/ten/tennessee-titans) **- Vernon Hargreaves III, CB, Florida**

Tennessee could move up to take an offensive tackle using the ransom they received from the Rams. If they stay at 15, Hargreaves would certainly make sense for Tennessee, filling a position of need with a good value selection. Hargreaves -- who has the best man-to-man cover skills in this draft class would immediately upgrade the Titans secondary.

16. [**Detroit Lions**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/det/detroit-lions)**- Jarran Reed, DT, Alabama**

Over the last several years, Detroit has lost a lot of talent along the defensive line (Suh and Fairley). In order to compete in the NFC North, your defensive tackles need to stop the run and be able to rush the passer. Reed provides the ability to do both and is the best Bama DT in the draft.

17. [**Atlanta Falcons**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/atl/atlanta-falcons) **– Darron Lee, LB, Ohio State**

Atlanta had one of the worst defenses in the NFL last year and they need to spend picks on the defensive side of the ball. Lee was a work out warrior and his athleticism will help the weak Falcons D immediately

18. [**Indianapolis Colts**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/ind/indianapolis-colts) **– A’Shawn Robinson, DT, Alabama**

The Colts in need of a strong DT and Robinson provides good QB pressure besides dominating against the run. This will help shore up the middle of the defense.

19. [**Buffalo Bills**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/buf/buffalo-bills) **-** [**Robert Nkemdiche**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49649/robert-nkemdiche)**, DT, Mississippi**

A top 5 talent and the #1 ranked high school recruit 3 years ago but questions linger and Rex Ryan thinks he get the most of our Nkemdiche. A talented and disruptive force who is a great athlete on the D line.

20. [**New York Jets**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/nyj/new-york-jets) **– Paxton Lynch, QB, Memphis**

The Jets are very intrigued with Lynch’s skillset. He was extremely productive in college. Set Memphis single season records for passing yards (3,778) and touchdowns (28) in 2015. Lynch won 19 games as a starter the past two seasons, including the program's first 10-win season since the 1930s. His overall record is 22-16 as a starter. Has an extremely high football IQ and would provide the Jets another option as they look to a long-term answer at the QB position..

21. [**Washington Redskins**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/wsh/washington-redskins) **– Chris Jones, DT, MSU**

Redskins poor D needs a major upgrade and signing CB Josh Norman helps but the guess here is more help up front. Jones is one of the ultimate boom/bust players in the 2016 class and Jones has the potential to develop into a highly disruptive inside presence if he remains focused. He has a rare combination of length, strength and athleticism.

22. [**Houston Texans**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/hou/houston-texans) **-** [**Corey Coleman**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/50135/corey-coleman)**, WR, Baylor**

Speed, speed and more speed -- that's what QB [Brock Osweiler](http://espn.go.com/nfl/player/_/id/14879/brock-osweiler) needs from the wide receiver who ends up playing opposite of [DeAndre Hopkins](http://espn.go.com/nfl/player/_/id/15795/deandre-hopkins), which is why we opted for Coleman over Mississippi's [Laquon Treadwell](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/50129/laquon-treadwell). Coleman has sub-4.4 wheels and the change-of-direction ability to create big plays after the catch.

23**.** [**Minnesota Vikings**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/min/minnesota-vikings) **– Josh Doctson, WR, TCU**

The Vikings need to add more playmakers for Teddy Bridgewater. With outstanding hand-eye coordination and body control, Doctson is highly effective on contested throws and jump balls. He'd give QB [Teddy Bridgewater](http://espn.go.com/nfl/player/_/id/16728/teddy-bridgewater) a receiver who can consistently win on short-to-intermediate throws. The TCU product is a natural pass-catcher who shows the ability to contort his body in contested-catch situations. He's not a burner (4.50 40), but Doctson is fast enough to threaten when he gets a seam after the catch. The Vikings could also take a look at Andrew Billings here.

24. [**Cincinnati Bengals**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/cin/cincinnati-bengals) **– Laquan Treadwell, WR, Mississippi**

Treadwell would look good lining up opposite of [A.J. Green](http://espn.go.com/nfl/player/_/id/13983/aj-green). He is a strong, physical receiver who makes the difficult catch in traffic. He is not a burner (4.63 40) but would be a great complement to A.J. Green and give Andy Dalton another weapon to use in his arsenal.

25. [**Pittsburgh Steelers**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/pit/pittsburgh-steelers) **– Eli Apple, CB, Ohio State**

The Steelers really need to improve their secondary and could do so with Apple. Apple has an outstanding size-speed combination; his 4.40 40-yard dash is the fourth-fastest by a DB 6-foot-1 or taller at the NFL combine since 2006. The Steelers need to add playmakers in the secondary and Apple fits the bill.

26**.** [**Seattle Seahawks**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/sea/seattle-seahawks) **– Noah Spence DE/OLB, Eastern Kentucky**

This would mark Seattle's first Round 1 selection since 2012. They like to add front 7 players with their high picks in the draft. If Seattle says put with this spot, we wouldn't be surprised to see them take a shot on OLB [Noah Spence](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49885/noah-spence) who is a high-risk, high-reward defender. Spence could be the best pass rusher in the draft and a top 10 talent but he was booted our of Ohio State for drug issues.

27. [**Green Bay Packers**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/gb/green-bay-packers) **-** [**Andrew Billings**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/49656/andrew-billings)**, DT, Baylor**

The Packers need to significantly improve the talent level of their front 7 on the defensive side of the football. The Packers picked a good year to have one of their most glaring needs be a 3-4 nose tackle. Billings has an outstanding combination of quickness, athleticism and power, which helps him wreak havoc on the interior. He'd be a plug-and-play starter for the Packers, who are looking to find a difference-maker on the interior after B.J. Raji announced he's taking a hiatus from football.

28. [**Kansas City Chiefs**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/kc/kansas-city-chiefs) **- Kevin Dodd, DE, Clemson**

With Justin Houston and Tamba Hali getting banged up last year and the need for an eventual replacement for Hali, Dodd is the choice event has only one season of full-time starting experience, but he took advantage of his opportunity, posting 23.5 tackles for loss. That was second overall in the FBS and up from 2.5 the season before. Noah Spence is another option but the theory here is Dodd doesn’t have off the field baggage that Spence is trying to overcome and the safer pick

29. [**Arizona Cardinals**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/ari/arizona-cardinals) **-** [**Ryan Kelly**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/50307/ryan-kelly)**, C, Alabama**

The top-ranked interior lineman on our board, Kelly has the frame, quickness, toughness and football intelligence to be a starter from day one in the NFL. There's a chance Arizona would think about drafting its QB of the future here, but center is the team's biggest need entering the draft.

30. [**Carolina Panthers**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/car/carolina-panthers) **– Artie Burns, CB Miami (FL)**

Yes, the Panthers suddenly have a glaring need at CB after rescinding [Josh Norman](http://espn.go.com/nfl/player/_/id/15124/josh-norman)'s franchise tag, Burns is a late riser on the draft boards even though some experts are lukewarm on him, CB has a major need and late in round 1 the risk is limited.

31**.** [**Denver Broncos**](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/team/_/name/den/denver-broncos) **– Vernon Butler, DT, Louisiana Tech**

Denver needs to restock their D line and Butler is a bargain at 31. Any other year he’s a top 20 pick.

**NOTE: There will be only 31 picks in the first round of the draft due to New England’s deflate gate penalty.**

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

1. Take the best wide receiver – The Vikings have a need to surround Teddy Bridgewater with playmakers. There are three playmakers at the wide receiver position that will be drafted in the first round – Laquan Treadwell of Mississippi, Corey Coleman of Baylor and Josh Doctson of TCU. The cream of the crop is Corey Coleman from Baylor. He is a tremendous playmaker that is extremely explosive in the open field. He possesses sub 4.4 speed and can take the top off the defense. We expect Coleman to be the first wide receiver taken. The next wide receiver is Laquan Treadwell of Mississippi. He is a strong, physical receiver that makes the tough catch in traffic. He is not a burner (4.63 40) but offers tremendous size for a receiver. He put up tremendous production and led the SEC in every receiving category last year. Treadwell could go to the Vikings at 23. The next wide receiver drafted in the first round is Josh Doctson, WR, TCU. Since transferring from Wyoming, Doctson has developed into one of the most acrobatic receivers in the nation. He has excellent size at 6’3” and showed off his athletic ability at the combine by posting a 4.5 40 yard dash and a 40” vertical jump. He is a matchup problem for defenses and has the highest upside of any receiver in this draft.
2. Take the best Defensive Tackle – The deepest position in the 2015 draft is Defensive Tackle. Due to this reason, the Vikings may wait to the later rounds to draft a defensive tackle. However, if the right player falls to them they will not hesitate to take one as Zimmer’s defense requires explosive defensive tackles and he plays up to 8 defensive linemen in a game. Shelden Rankins, DT, Louisville is the number one rated defensive tackles and will probably not be there at pick #23. Three players that may be available at Pick 23 include: Andrew Billings, DT, Baylor, Jarran Reed, DT, Alabama, A’Shawn Robinson, DT, Alabama. Billings was told if he was there at pick 23 the Vikings would pick him. If the technique and discipline catch up to his natural brawling strength and mentality, Billings flashes dominant qualities. A scheme-versatile prospect, he will be valued as a nose tackle by odd fronts and a one-technique tackle by even fronts. Billings compares to Bennie Logan, DT, Philadelphia Eagles - Similar to Logan, Billings isn't the most physically impressive lineman, but he is built low to the ground with a powerful base that will fit both even and odd fronts. Reed is country strong with tree trunks for thighs and long arms, Reed is a classic two-gap run-stuffer stout enough to play inside at defensive tackle or outside at end. At 6-3, 311 pounds, Reed has the girth and strength to line up virtually anywhere along the defensive line, making him a fit for 3-4 and 4-3 teams, alike. Reed compares to Dan Williams, DT, Oakland Raiders - Reed and Williams are well-built, nimble nose tackles who are capable of shutting down the run, appealing to various NFL schemes. Robinson is a stout run defender but is raw as a pass rusher. His production doesn't always show on the stat sheet - was mostly asked to two-gap, clog things up and occupy blockers to free up the linebackers at Alabama. He is the poster prospect for the golden rule of scouting (traits over production). He compares to Michael Brockers, DT, Los Angeles Rams - Although he doesn't have a sky-high ceiling, Robinson should start in the NFL for a long time as a three-down defender, fitting even and odd fronts, similar to Michael Brockers when he was a mid-first round pick out of LSU.
3. Take the best Guard/Tackle – Continuing to build the youth and depth on the offensive line could be a priority for the Vikings in Round 1. Although they added a lot of talent and depth in free agency, we expect them to add depth in this draft. Options in Round 1 could include: Cody Whitehair, G, Kansas State, Germaine Ifedi, OL, Texas A&M and Taylor Decker, OT, Ohio State. Whitehair is the best interior lineman in the draft and could compete for a starting job right away. Ifedi is a versatile lineman that can play multiple positions. He could add both youth and depth across the line. Decker is a prototypical left tackle that could eventually replace Matt Khalil. A starting left tackle at Ohio State, Decker has the athleticism and technique to play tackle in the NFL. He is a powerful mauler in the run game and was extremely productive in college. We think it is more likely they address other positions groups in the first round, due to their free agent acquisitions. However, if a talented tackle falls to them at 23 they would not hesitate to make the pick.
4. Take the Best Safety – A playmaker to pair with Harrison Smith could be an option in Round 1. Two players that they may take at 23 are Karl Joseph, S, West Virginia and Vonn Bell, S, Ohio State. Joseph is an extremely physical safety with the ability to make plays on the back end. Pound-for-pound one of the most physical players in the country, and plays much tougher than he looks. He loves violent contact and times his hits well to jar the ball loose. He plays fast and low to the ground to generate his power as a tackler, using leverage and reckless abandon as a finisher.Would be a perfect complement to Smith at Safety. Joseph suffered a knee injury in 2015 and if his medical checks out he could be a steal in this draft. Bell plays with the requisite mental and physical toughness and is active in run support, but needs to improve his tackling mechanics. He compares to Tashaun Gipson, Cleveland Browns - The ability to hold up on an island in both man and zone coverages, Bell plays with a decisive reactor and collects himself well in space to make plays, drawing similarities to the Browns opportunistic safety.

We think they will stay put and draft the best player available using one of the first 4 options highlighted above. We think the choices will come down to Josh Doctson, WR, TCU, Andrew Billings, DT, Baylor, Vonn Bell, S, Ohio State and [Germain Ifedi](http://insider.espn.go.com/nfl/draft/player/_/id/50385/germain-ifedi), OT, Texas A&M. We believe the Vikings will add playmakers on offense in an effort to improve the 29th ranked offense by selecting Josh Doctson, WR, TCU. Doctson will provide the Vikings with a big target that has the athletic ability to stretch the field (4.5 40) and compete for balls (41” vertical). He would be a great complement to the receivers we already have on the roster and add the type of playmaker Bridgewater needs to take the next step..

They will then target guard/tackle, defensive tackle and safety in round 2.

In terms of the Vikings, we see three alternatives that could unfold in the second round (depending on what they do in the first round):

1. Take the best Defensive tackle available. This could include: Vernon Butler, DT/NT, Louisiana Tech, Kenny Clark, DT, UCLA and Chris Jones, DT, Mississippi State.
2. Take the best wide receiver available. This could include: Tyler Boyd, WR, Pittsburgh, Will fuller, WR, Notre Dame and Michael Thomas, WR, Ohio State.
3. Take the best offensive lineman available. This could include: Cody Whitehair, G, Kansas State and Germaine Ifedi, OL, Texas A&M
4. Take the Best Safety available – Karl Joseph, S, West Virginia, TJ Green, S, Clemson, Keanu Neal, S, Florida

We think scenario it will come down to a choice between (depending on their first round choice): Karl Joseph, S, West Virginia, TJ Green, S, Clemson, Cody Whitehair, G, Kansas State and Vernon Butler, DT, Louisiana Tech. Keep an eye on Deion Jones, a fast athletic LB from LSU who would be a great fit for Zimmer’s D and fit in and form the best LB crop in league. He could go anywhere from round 2-3.

Based on our projected first round pick of Josh Doctson, our pick is Karl Joseph, S, West Virginia. The Vikings have done their homework on this kid and they like him as a physical safety. He had a knee injury in 2015 that may scare away some teams. Joseph will be a perfect complement to Harrison Smith and provide the Vikings with a physical, tough safety that will play the style of defense Zimmer expects.

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

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Options in round 3 that the Vikings could draft:

1. **Rashard Higgins, WR, Colorado State –** Higgins could be on option for the Vikings in Round 3 if they do not address wide receiver in Rounds 1 and 2.In 2014, Higgins was a consensus All-American and the nation's leading receiver. Higgins led the country with 1,750 receiving yards, 17 touchdowns and an 18.2 yards-per-catch average in 2014. He went for more than 100 yards receiving in nine consecutive games, including against Philadelphia Eagles second-round pick Eric Rowe and the Utah Utes in the Las Vegas Bowl. After just two seasons with McElwain calling the plays and Grayson delivering strikes, Higgins already has hauled in Colorado State's career record for receiving touchdowns with 23 scores. His production was down in 2015 due to these changes but he would be a great pick in the third round.
2. **Eric Murray, CB, Minnesota** - Murray wasted little time in getting onto the field, logging snaps in all 13 games as a true freshman, albeit mostly on special teams. He emerged as a starter as a true sophomore in 2013 and never looked back, recording 187 tackles, 24 pass breakups, five forced fumbles, two interceptions and two blocked kicks over his career, earning All-Big-Ten accolades after each of his starting seasons. Perhaps because he doesn't possess the glitzy interception numbers, Murray hasn't often been touted as a top cornerback prospect. His steady tape, however, argues otherwise. It was Murray and not his more heralded teammate Boddy-Calhoun, for example, who was given the Carl Eller Award in 2015 as the team's best overall defender, as well as being named the Gophers' best defensive back of the year. While perhaps lacking top ball skills, Murray, who lines up as the boundary corner, is very well-rounded with good size, speed and physicality for the position. He possesses a well-built, NFL-ready frame with good size, broad shoulders, length and muscular development. Plays with a pro's mentality, showing confidence in coverage as well as in run support. Murray is well-versed in press, off and zone coverages, showing off his versatility as a reliable run defender and blitzer. He seems to enjoy the physicality of the game, lowering his shoulder and bringing his hips to deliver forceful hits to ball-carriers. Murray shows the time he's spent in the film room, diagnosing routes and quickly reacting to pick plays and quick screens. Doesn't panic when the ball is in the air, snaking his hand between those of the would-be receiver to rip the ball free. Voted a team captain in 2015 and was highly touted by the coaching staff and his teammates for his commitment on and off the field
3. **Jordan Jenkins, OLB/3-4OLB, Georgia -** Jenkins closed out his Georgia career with a strong senior season, finishing with 10.5 tackles for loss and 4.0 sacks among his 59 total tackles in 2015. He also forced a pair of fumbles and was second on the team with 12 quarterback hits. With opponents focusing on All-American Jarvis Jones in 2012, Jenkins burst onto the scene with 31 tackles, including eight for loss and five sacks as a true freshman. Jenkins took over as the 'JACK linebacker in then-defensive coordinator Todd Grantham's 3-4 alignment and improved his numbers (45 tackles, including 12 tackles for loss and another five sacks) but did not emerge as the dominant force some anticipated. Jenkins, who proudly wears the captain "C" on his jersey, stood up on both sides of the line of scrimmage in the Bulldogs' versatile 3-4 scheme, often putting his hand on the ground as a defensive end in four-man fronts. He is heavy-handed to extend and the point of attack and set a hard edge, seeing through blockers to track the ball and make plays.
4. **Sterling Shepard, WR, Oklahoma -** Shepard has an undersized frame that makes him often out-matched vs. physical corners. Quicker than he is fast. In our view, Shepard routinely proved to be a mismatch during one-on-one drills against cornerbacks at the Senior Bowl, using his short-area burst to create spacing and give his quarterback a clean target. If the corner doesn't make contact with Shepard off the line of scrimmage, it's too easy for the smallish, but talented receiver to make something happen. Shepard has shown toughness throughout his career and frankly, he'll need to continue to play with this chip on his shoulder to enjoy similar success at the next level.
5. **Darian Thompson, S, Boise State -** Thompson has the anticipation and ball-skills to read quarterbacks and make plays on the ball, but he also guesses too much and lacks the same cover skills once asked to turn and run. His inconsistencies make it tough to trust him as the last line of defense, but his playmaking instincts and toughness will interest NFL coaches as a downhill safety. He compares to Bacarri Rambo, Buffalo Bills - Although false steps and aggressive reads will lead to big plays for the offense, safeties like Rambo and Thompson have the playmaking skills to post their fair share of big plays as well.
6. **Miles Killebrew, S, Southern Utah -** Killebrew racked up an astounding 243 tackles over the past two seasons, including 132 as a senior to go with 2.5 tackles for loss, seven pass break-ups and another seven passes defended. He is a four-year starter who started 11 games as a freshman and finished third on the team with 69 sacks, and Killebrew followed that up with honorable mention All-Big Sky honors in 2013 by recording 54 tackles, including 4.5 tackles for loss. Killebrew was a highly productive strong safety for the Thunderbirds, lining up near the line of scrimmage and also single-high to patrol the middle and deep half of the field. He moves well for his size and covers a lot of ground with an attacking mindset, but struggles to anticipate and needs to see things quicker. He is a physical presence and although he has NFL range, Killebrew does his best work when the field shrinks and there is less for him to process. A see ball, get ball type of player, Killebrew is a safety/linebacker hybrid who doesn't always trust what he sees, but his physical ingredients give him a chance to develop into an NFL starter. He impressed with his awareness and closing speed during Senior Bowl practices, and should be a standout on special teams as a rookie before competing for starter snaps.
7. **Shon Coleman, OT, Auburn -** Teams looking for a case study in strength and persistence will appreciate Coleman's story. A former top-20 recruit and survivor, Coleman enters the NFL on the verge of earning his Master's Degree. A two-year starting left tackle in Auburn's spread scheme, Coleman arrived at Auburn in 2010 as a top recruit with a chance to earn a starting job as a true freshman. But his life drastically changed that spring when he was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia and spent the next two seasons focused on beating the disease - required 30 months of chemo treatments. After he was declared cancer-free, Coleman redshirted in 2012 as he worked to get back into football shape and spent the 2013 season as the backup to future first-round pick Greg Robinson. With Robinson off to the NFL, Coleman took over the left tackle job in 2014 and started 25 games the past two seasons, steadily progressing into one of the SEC's top blockers. In our view, Robinson is a balanced big man with long arms and strong hands. However, after spending three years away from the game, he is still raw in several areas, bending too much at the waist and not properly using angles. Coleman has NFL starting potential if given time to develop, but the medical evaluations will be the deciding factor on his draft projection. He compares to his former college teammate, Greg Robinson, St. Louis Rams: Like the man he replaced at left tackle for the Tigers, Coleman offers a remarkable combination of size, power and athleticism. He's also raw as a pass blocker, however, which could mean an initial switch inside to guard as he acclimates to a more traditional offense.
8. **Jerald, Hawkins, OT, LSU -** While La'el Collins and Vadal Alexander earned most of the attention from the media over the past three years, Hawkins has generated excitement in the scouting community, as well, starting all 36 games of his LSU career before opting to declare for the 2016 draft. After redshirting in 2012, Hawkins earned the starting role at right tackle in his second season on campus, remaining in this role until taking over for Collins on the blindside in 2015. Hawkins was a four-sport athlete all four years of his high school career -- football, baseball, basketball and track -- and played defensive tackle and offensive tackle. He won the state title in shot put in 2011. This all-around athleticism is evident in Hawkins' play and could ultimately earn him a starting role in the NFL. However, Hawkins is not as powerful as his former teammates and needs polishing in his technique. In our view, still far from a polished product, Hawkins is one of the more intriguing underclassmen tackles in the 2016 draft with starting experience on both sides in a pro-style offense against top competition. With greater commitment to hand placement on the field and the weight room off it, Hawkins could emerge as a starting tackle in the NFL, as well.

**NOTE: If Jaylen Smith, LB, Notre Dame is available in the third round look for the Vikings to take a gamble on the injured linebacker. He was the best player in the draft prior to the devastating knee injury. They could put him on injured reserve and he could replace Chad Greenway next year. If he returns 100%, he will be the steal of the draft.**

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

1. **Ryan Smith, CB, North Carolina Central -** Focusing on basketball in high school, the NFL wasn't in his plans. But after joining the football team as a senior in high school and attracting attention from FCS-level programs, a professional football future started to become an option. After two seasons at strong safety at North Carolina Central, Smith moved to cornerback as a junior where he starred the last two seasons, becoming the first NCCU player to earn an invitation to the NFL Combine. In our view, Smith is a balanced athlete with smooth movement skills and little wasted motion to shadow routes. Although he lacks ideal size and experience, Smith possesses the start/stop quickness and natural cover traits to contribute in a NFL secondary.
2. **Tyrone Holmes, DE, Montana –** Holmes is a clone of Everson Griffen. At 6’2” and 260 pounds he is built like Griffen and has the speed (4.59 40) to go with the size. If he can live up to those expectations, he will have a good career. He would be a great pick here.
3. **Terrance Smith, OLB/ILB, Florida State -** A three-year starter, Smith started at the "MIKE" in 2013 before replacing Telvin Smith as the Seminoles' starting "WILL" linebacker in 2014. He finished third on the team in tackles (87) last season, adding 4.5 tackles for loss and two interceptions, including a pivotal 94-yard pick-off return for a touchdown against Florida. His senior season didn't go quite as planned, mostly because of a nagging ankle issue, but Smith did finish fourth on the team with 66 tackles despite missing four games. He had 4.5 tackles for loss, an interception, a quarterback hit and one forced fumble as well. In our view, Smith has next-level potential and with development in some areas, he should at worst be a key special teams performer in the NFL. His aggressive mentality will serve him well.
4. **Stephen Weatherly, OLB/DE/3-4OLB, Vanderbilt -** Weatherly looks the part of an NFL prospect with broad shoulders and long limbs. He is often used off the edge as a pass rusher, showing enough burst to cross the face of tackles. He needs to add more functional strength to threaten as a bull rusher, as well as improve his awareness of cut blocks. Weatherly shows agility and awareness in coverage, quickly changing directions and pursuing with passion.
5. K**.J. Dillon, S, West Virginia -** Invited to the play in the 2016 Senior Bowl, Dillon proved his worth with a good week of practice. He was also recognized with 2015 All-Big 12 second team honors for his standout senior season with the Mountaineers, finishing with 55 tackles, including 7.5 tackles for loss, eight pass break-ups, two interceptions and forced a fumble. A fixture since his true freshman season (2012), Dillon adapted quickly to the big stage and grew and matured his game every season. He attended Apopka High School in Orange County, Fla., one of America's hotbeds for NFL talent. Some notable alumni include Pro Football Hall of Fame defensive tackle Warren Sapp, New York Giants safety Brandon Meriweather and Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Zack Greinke.
6. **D.J. Reader, DT, Clemson** - Reader missed roughly half the 2015 season due to personal reasons but came back to the team in mid-October and went on to earn an invitation to the Senior Bowl, where he was a standout during the week of practices. In seven regular-season games he finished with seven tackles. “D.J. Reader has decided to step away from football for a while," coach Dabo Swinney announced Aug. 25. "He has some personal issues he has to deal with at this time. We are not sure when he will return. We will support him any way we can." A former three-star prospect from Greensboro (N.C.) Grimsley High School, Reader signed with Clemson over North Carolina, Maryland and others in the Class of 2012. Reader was a three-sport star at Grimsley, where he was the team's starting center in basketball and a standout baseball player (pitcher and designated hitter). As a true freshman at Clemson, Reader got in the defensive line rotation on the gridiron and also played on the Tigers' baseball team as a first baseman. He recorded 40 tackles and three quarterback pressures in only 236 snaps. In 2013, Reader earned three starts and played in 13 games, registering 43 tackles, five tackles for a loss and three sacks. As a junior in 2014, Reader had 27 stops, 2.5 tackles for a loss, 1.5 sacks and 10 quarterback pressures in only 250 plays. In our view, Reader likely lost draft value over the past six months, but gained some momentum back with a good showing at the Senior Bowl in front of the NFL executives and scouts, who will be doing a lot of homework on the reasons he felt like he needed to be away from Clemson. Reader does have versatility and athletic ability to play multiple positions across a front and should slip in to the back end of the draft. Again, that could hinge on what he does leading up to the draft.

Options for Vikings in Rounds 5-7:

1. Rees Odhiambo, OL, Boise State
2. K.J. Maye, WR, Minnesota
3. Moritz Wilhelm Boehringer, WR, Germany
4. Jake Brendel, C, UCLA
5. Devon Cajuste, WR, Stanford
6. Theiren Cockran, DE/3-4OLB, Minnesota
7. Trevon Coley, DT, Florida Atlantic
8. Ken Crawley, CB, Colorado
9. Darrell Greene, G, San Diego Stat
10. De’Vondre Campbell, LB, Minnesota
11. Darion Griswold, TE, Arkansas State
12. Joe Haeg, OT, North Dakota State
13. Keith Marshall, RB, Georgia
14. Justin Zimmer, DT, Ferris State
15. Denver Kirkland, G, Arkansas
16. Darius Latham, DT, Indiana
17. Steve Longa, OLB, Rutgers
18. Desmond Morgan, OLB, Michigan
19. Eric Rawls, CB, Kentucky State

Sleepers:

1. Chuckie Keeton, QB, Utah State
2. Roy Robertson-Harris, DE, Texas-El Paso
3. Briean Boddy-Calhoun, CB, Minnesota
4. Drew Kaser, P, Texas A&M

The Vikings have picks in every round this year and have 8 total picks. They can fill find depth needs in several areas in this draft. Most notably, the Vikings needs are:

* Wide Receiver
* Offensive Line
* Safety
* Depth at Cornerback

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

Mink and Obey from Chicago!